

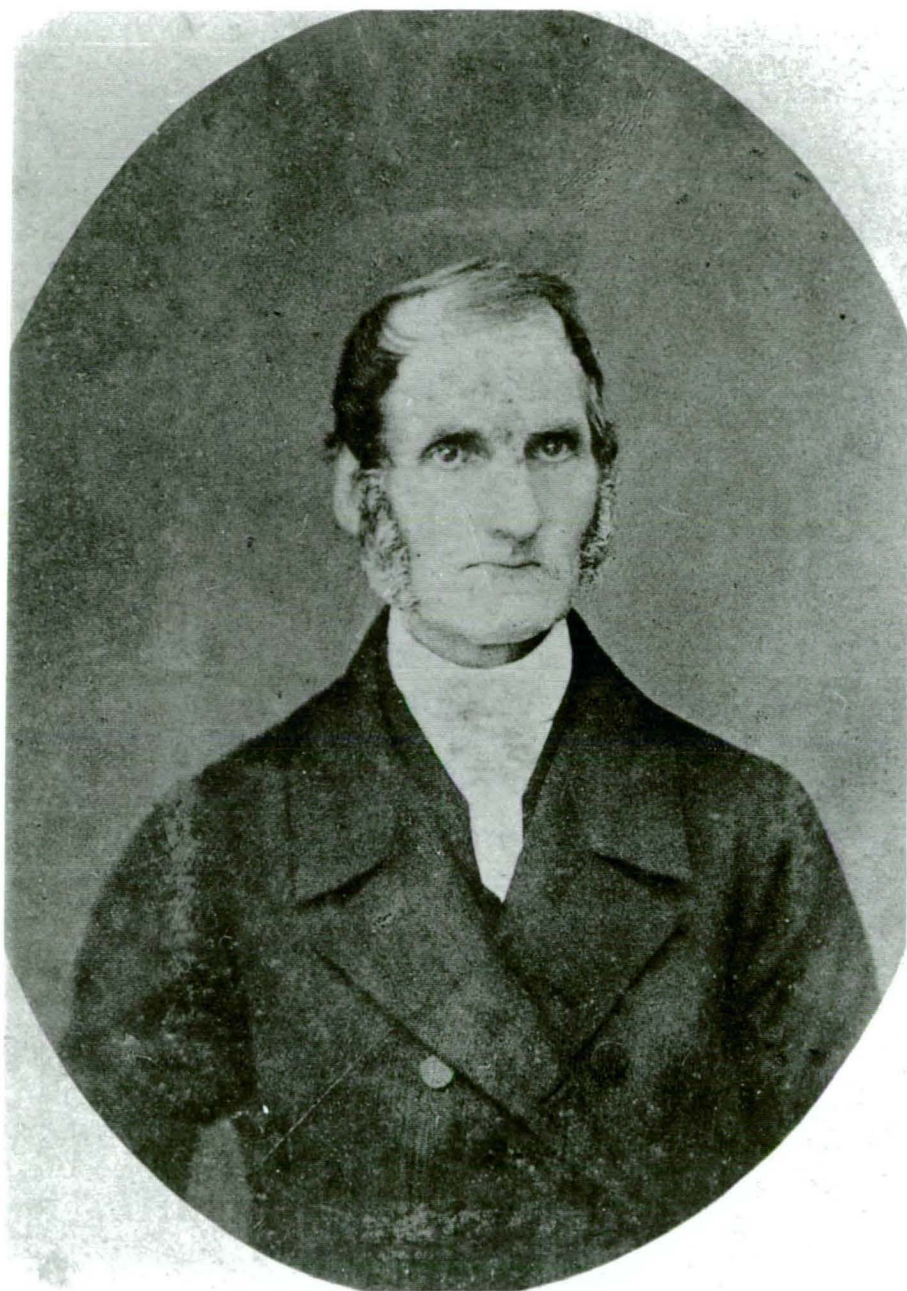
THOMAS COKE BROWNELL

A HUMANITARIAN COLONIAL

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requirements for the degree of Master of Humanities,
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December, 1995.



THOMAS COKE BROWNELL



ELIZABETH BROWNELL

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THESIS ABSTRACT

DR. THOMAS COKE BROWNELL - A HUMANITARIAN COLONIAL

The history of Van Diemen's Land tends to be viewed from above through the correspondence and reports of Government officials, legal documentation, or biographies of the rich and famous; or from below through the study of the convict system or the memoirs of convicts themselves. How informative then to view life at a middle level through the unpublished diary of Thomas Coke Brownell, a young doctor of modest means who emigrated to Van Diemen's Land with his young family in 1829. The diary covers the years 1829-1858, telling of Brownell's experiences, his attitudes and insights into life, as he worked with various levels of Van Diemen's Land society.

The diary raises questions in the reader's mind: Why did a young doctor in private practice in England take his family from relative security with a predictable future to uncertain employment in an untamed, far-distant convict colony? What expectations inspired Thomas Coke Brownell to make such a momentous decision? Most interesting to the historian: What were the realities of life in Van Diemen's Land? How did Thomas, his wife Elizabeth, and their eleven children adapt to that life?

Brownell's diary in conjunction with Official Reports and Letters gives enough detail to piece together the life of an average Government doctor in early colonial times. It begins with the Brownells' emigration to Swan River, W.A. with high expectations of generous land grants. The primitive conditions and unusable land there drove the family on to Hobart. By then penniless, Dr. Brownell accepted an appointment as a Colonial Assistant Surgeon at Maria Island Convict Settlement. That appointment was followed by a move to Port Arthur. Then came a five year

interlude of living their dream of life on the land which turned into a nightmare of poverty and problems brought on by drought, poor seed, economic depression and Thomas's lack of farming experience. Accepting the reality that Government Medical Service was the only assured financial security, Brownell took up an appointment as Colonial Assistant Surgeon at Avoca, followed by twenty years service at various stations such as George Town, again Maria Island, Port Arthur, the Hobart General Hospital and again Port Arthur.

Personal glimpses of family health, farming and financial failure, living conditions at the various stations, the depravity of the convicts, the heavy workloads imposed on medical staff, and primitive medical facilities are gleaned through Brownell's descriptions of the many difficulties, disappointments and occasional achievements at the bourgeois level of society.

Brownell's diary affords insights into an admirable, likeable, humanitarian man, and more importantly into many facets of life in Van Diemen's Land over almost thirty years. His frequent changes in appointment, his constant battle for sufficient funds, his Wesleyan determination to bring God and education to all men, brought Brownell into contact and sometimes conflict with top Government officers, the lowest level of convict, and struggling free settlers like himself. Brownell's observations on convicts, Government policies on land grants, Transportation and trade, Church politics, emigration, and the state of the economy add dimension to the historical picture.

A detailed study of Thomas Coke Brownell's diary plus information from Official Records paints a picture of life at the middle level of society which is a valuable addition to the fabric of social history in Van Diemen's Land.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION		page 1
CHAPTER 1	The First Disappointment	page 3
CHAPTER 2	A Second Beginning	page 10
CHAPTER 3	The Dream	page 30
CHAPTER 4	The Reality	page 49
CONCLUSION		page 66
APPENDIX I	Biographical Outline	page 68
APPENDIX II	Dr. James Scott	page 70
BIBLIOGRAPHY		page 71

ILLUSTRATIONS

Thomas Coke Brownell
(Courtesy of Graham Brownell)

Frontispiece I

Elizabeth Brownell
(Courtesy of Graham Brownell)

Frontispiece II

Two Views of Darlington

after Page 12

Medical Officer's House
(Courtesy of Lynette Ross, Port Arthur Historical Site)

after Page 63

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INTRODUCTION

Most of the early settlers to Van Diemen's Land had no choice about their emigration or their destination. The convicts were ordered by the British Courts to be transported to the foreign land where most of them would live out their lives. The military who accompanied the convicts were likewise ordered to the Colony by the British Government though theirs was only a temporary stay until they were posted elsewhere. But what motivated the free emigrants to leave their familiar homeland, their families and friends for such a far distant land still wild and primitive in every respect?

For the poor emigrants from the farms or industrial slums the opportunities for work, prospects for their children, and better living conditions held out hope of a life unimaginable in Victorian Britain. Their escape is understandable. However, the rationale behind the emigration of a young doctor in private practice with a pregnant wife and an infant daughter is quite a different matter. What expectations inspired him to such a momentous decision? More importantly, once the decision was made, what were the realities of life in the Colonies for an educated young man with professional skills, optimism and stamina? A study of Dr. Thomas Coke Brownell's unpublished diary¹ affords just such insights into life at various levels of Van Diemen's Land society from 1830-1858 as Thomas, Elizabeth and their eleven children adapted to that life.

Brownell's diary gradually reveals his reasons for leaving England, details his attempts at a new lifestyle, and describes his struggle over almost thirty years to provide a livelihood for his large family. Out of the diary emerges an admirable, likeable, humanitarian man who maintained his self-reliance, with optimism to the fore, and with long, hard labour an accepted fact.

¹ T.C. Brownell, "The Diary of Thomas Coke Brownell, M.D., of Huddersfield, from 1829 to 1858", (Hobart, unpublished, 1959).

Thomas Coke Brownell's frequent changes in appointment, his constant battle for sufficient funds, his Wesleyan determination to bring God and education to all men (particularly convicts) brought him into contact and sometimes conflict with top Government officers, the lowest level of convict, and struggling free settlers like himself. The story of Brownell's career plus his observations on convicts, Government policies, Church politics, the state of the economy, and whether or not to emigrate are valuable additions to the store of the social history of Tasmania.

CHAPTER 1 - THE FIRST DISAPPOINTMENT

In May 1830 Dr. Thomas Coke Brownell arrived in Van Diemen's Land where he spent the next twenty-eight years caring for convicts' bodies, spirits and minds as a doctor, a catechist and a teacher. There were some rewards but mostly disappointments. Through it all Brownell maintained his resilience and managed to bear exigencies and vicissitudes. He never tried to return to England or to emigrate elsewhere, though he mentioned such thoughts in letters when problems grew desperate. The irony of Brownell's situation was that he originally emigrated from England to Swan River, Western Australia (not to Van Diemen's Land) with a dream of life on the land in a new society amongst Wesleyans, leaving the financial uncertainties of medical practice behind. How then did such a regression eventuate?

The cause for Brownell's reversal lay in the reports and promises of the British Government related to the Swan River Colony:

Land at Swan River was reported to be fertile and admirably suited for agriculture. The new colony was to take only the "best" of English traditions and not be "marred" by any convict element and land was to be granted on very generous terms. Two hundred acres of land, then considered a fairly large farm in England and worth some hundreds of pounds depending on location, could be obtained in the new colony for an investment of just fifteen pounds.²

Here was the answer to the dreams of a young doctor struggling on the meagre earnings of private medical practice. Brownell yearned to go on the land not only for a healthy, productive and independent lifestyle but possibly also as an opportunity to further establish himself in society. There are references in Elizabeth Brownell's letters to her mother which indicate her father disapproved of Thomas.³ At that time a path to wealth, status and influence lay in landownership,

² Statham, P., (ed.) The Tanner Letters, a Pioneer Saga of Swan River and Tasmania 1831-1845, (Nedlands, Western Australia, 1981), p.XV.

³ Brownell, "Diary", p.31.

so it is quite likely that young Thomas saw the Swan River Colony as a golden opportunity.

Another factor would have influenced the Brownells to emigrate. Thomas Brownell was a fervent Wesleyan with the missionary zeal (though not the calling) to preach and teach the 'Word'. A number of families from the reformist church saw Swan River as an opportunity to establish a new society based on the Methodist faith. Among those families were the Hentys, the Tanners, the Viveashes, and the Hardeys. Joseph Hardey was a preacher in Yorkshire and a friend of Brownell. When Joseph Hardey and Michael and James Clarkson decided to charter the *Tranby* to sail to Swan River it is little wonder under the circumstances that Dr. Brownell signed on as the ship's surgeon.

The *Tranby* under the command of John Story left Hull on September 9, 1829 with a crew of 15, cabin passengers numbering 10 (including Elizabeth who was six months pregnant and 21 month old Jane Anne Brownell), and 25 steerage passengers mainly tradesmen and servants of the Hardeys and Clarksons.⁴ The ship was loaded with livestock, machinery, seeds and plants, food provisions, personal items of furniture and belongings, weapons, and materials for buildings and for boats.

The steerage passengers, stock and possessions on board were brought to fulfil the stipulation in the Swan River "Conditions of Settlement" that land would only be granted on the basis of labour and real assets which settlers introduced to the colony. The value of Hardey's goods and fares entitled him to 16, 546 acres of land.⁵ This grant was not unusually large to a pioneer settler. The largest would have been to Governor Stirling, Thomas Peel and Colonel Latour who were each awarded in excess of 100,000 acres,⁶ while the Hentys were entitled to 80,000

⁴ Brownell, "Diary", pp.ii-iii.

⁵ The West Australian, 18-8-1976.

⁶ Statham, Tanner Letters, p. xviii.

acres.⁷ The fact that Brownell was only granted 1200 acres is evidence of his limited finances and minimal worldly goods.

The *Tranby's* voyage out was largely uneventful except for a fireball which passed through the ship, fortunately only killing one sheep. There was one fright over an approaching ship thought to be pirates but when it turned away the consensus was that it must have been a slave ship. Only two events were mentioned in his diary which required the medical skills of Dr. Brownell. The first was the happy arrival of his first son born Dec. 5, 1829, named James Story (in honour of the *Tranby's* Commander).⁸ The second was the tragic death of young William Hardey, 17 year old son of Joseph. William died in his sleep of colic.⁹ The *Tranby* was privileged to have a skilled and caring surgeon on board, even though he was seldom needed. Ships' surgeons by the late 1820's "had to be qualified, and they were paid by the government and supervised by the Commissioner in London. Even so, many of them were pretty doubtful doctors",¹⁰ and sometimes even a danger to their patients. The common plagues on emigrant ships such as scurvy, dysentery and the typhus - carrying lice were never mentioned in Dr. Brownell's journal which would indicate his scrupulous supervision of the *Tranby's* food, water and personal hygiene.

After such a relatively pleasant five months on the high seas, the anticipated arrival at Swan River was to produce a shock. The port of Fremantle was little more than a tent village. Brownell did not write of his initial impressions but James Henty described it as "not a single house built, nothing but tents and temporary sheds; the general appearance of the land indicates great poverty of soil. Spirits rather depressed."¹¹

⁷ Bassett, M., The Hentys, An Australian Colonial Tapestry, (Melbourne, 1954), p.38.

⁸ Brownell, "Diary", p.6.

⁹ Ibid., p.8.

¹⁰ Charlwood, D., The Long Farewell (Ringwood, Victoria, 1981), p.139.

¹¹ Bassett, M., The Hentys, p.98.

Brownell followed routine procedure and "went up the river to Perth, the Seat of Government, entered myself and family at the Colonial Office and obtained license to live in the Colony, the same evening returned by moonlight and reached Fremantle about 1 o'clock on Sunday morning."¹² Presumably the doctor had to either camp on the beach or be rowed back out to the *Tranby* in the middle of the night. With no available accommodation for his family, Brownell stayed on board the *Tranby* for a fortnight. Then, as he explained in his diary:

having got my goods on shore I took my leave of the Tranby, constructed a small tent on the beach with my boxes etc. as a wall round about and covered it with old blankets and curtains. Here I resided with my family 8 weeks, the first five of which I was waiting an opportunity of conveying my family and goods 19 miles up the river to the Peninsular Farm, a Government Reserve which his Excellency gave up to be distributed in proportions among the party who had come out in the Tranby as a present convenience. By the return of the Land Board I was entitled to 1,200 acres of land in consideration of the amount of property brought into the colony. But it was nowhere to be found. The only land anything like soil being situated on the banks of the two rivers, commencing about 17 miles from the mouth of the Swan River, and that granted away in the very large allotments to their very sources.¹³ From this part extending along the Island in a Southerly direction between Darling's Range and the sea, one continued barren waste presents itself to the traveller till he reaches Port Leschenault near Geographer's Bay near 200 miles from the head of the Settlement. On the southern side of the mouth of S.R. an extensive flat is found consisting of firm sand covered with bushes and brushwood, some large trees, and covering in some parts a species of soft chalk stone. Upon this plot of sand a few wooden houses, huts and tents of various descriptions are built and is designated Fremantle. Several wealthy settlers had taken up their abodes here and were keeping stores or Inns for the public accommodation. It is in fact (and from its situation must be) the Port to the whole Colony while it exists, and the general Mart for every kind of merchandise. Fifteen miles up the River on the opposite side to this, the embryo of another Town is situated and designated

¹² Brownell, T.C., "Diary", p.9.

¹³ A fact confirmed by James Henty when he wrote his family they "would be surprised to find that a quantity of land is already allocated; almost every officer both of the army and Navy stationed here and the Government Clerks, etc. have Grants generally from 1000 to 5000 acres. (3 ships) having arrived by October 1829, it has increased the number of claimants astoundingly, indeed faster than the Surveyor-General can survey a Map". Bassett, The Hentys, p.105.

Perth. It is considered the capital of the Colony, is the seat of Government and the residence of the Governor, Capt. Sterling. The mouth of the river is effectively blocked up by a bar of rocks on the one side, and sand on the other; leaving a narrow channel in the centre deep enough only for large boats to enter, and that attended with considerable risk at times. Proceeding upwards, the navigation is quite as bad arising from its shallowness; in many parts not allowing boats drawing two and a half feet to pass, sometimes for days; the land and sea breezes too are uncertain in their duration, preventing the communication between the two Towns and the interior for 7 or 8 days together. The heat of the atmosphere is very great, during the greater part of the year, much higher than is given in the Official Reports in England. It was not the latter part of Autumn yet the thermometer generally stood at 83° in the shade and sometimes 126° in the sun. The water at Fremantle is very bad, not wholesome to be drunk without spirits, and almost invariably producing dysentery. During the winter season shipping cannot anchor in the Gages Roads with any kind of safety from the tremendous gales of wind which are then prevalent. Cockburn Sound is their only refuge, and that is distant several miles, and the communication with Fremantle equally uncertain from the kind of wind that happens to prevail and by no means unattended with danger under the best circumstances. During our stay I was severely afflicted with Dysentery and my family with ophthalmia. We remained eight weeks at Fremantle and then, considering from a combination of circumstances the future prospects of the Colony succeeding were very obscure and the health of my family doubtful, we took a passage on board the Warrior - bound for Hobart Town, Van Diemen's Land, and sailed April 15th for that place.¹⁴

Here then is the explanation for the Brownells' further emigration to Van Diemen's Land. Brownell had received a major setback in his plans for a prosperous new life on the land among friends with a mutual religious dedication. That he was only one among many at Swan River who were similarly disappointed is confirmed in both the Henty and the Tanner letters home to England. However much the Government would try to shift the blame onto the settlers' excessive expectations, the fact remained as James Henty wrote, "The Land here is very unpromising and the capabilities of the Colony have been vastly over-rated."¹⁵

¹⁴ Brownell, "Diary", p.10.

¹⁵ Bassett, The Hentys, p.103.

The tragedy for Brownell was the loss of his possessions and all his savings in the move to Van Diemen's Land. He had to sell everything in Fremantle to pay for the family's passage to Hobart. "Cash was so scarce in the colony that barter became the basis of all domestic transactions,"¹⁶ Brownell would have had to trade at a serious disadvantage to be paid in cash. He "suffered many losses as to property, nay the loss of all things and endured many hardships."¹⁷ This was a financial set-back from which the Brownells never really recovered.

The option of course was for Brownell to stay in Swan River and struggle on. The Hardeys and Clarksons did so and established themselves as successful farmers. But unlike Brownell they had been farmers in England and landed in Swan River with vastly more goods, supplies and farm hands. James Henty moved on as did the Tanners although after a much longer period in Swan River. If farming failed in Van Diemen's Land for Dr. Brownell at least the opportunities for a medical career in the Public Service would be far more available there - a situation the Doctor took advantage of for the next twenty-eight years.

When concluding his short interlude at Swan River in 1830, Brownell predicted "obscure future prospects" for that colony. It is interesting to find the Quaker traveller Frederick Mackie observing in 1855:

There is much poor land ... along the sea coast, this is doubtless one great reason that it has made as yet no progress. Granting large tracks of land in a reckless manner to the first settlers appears to have been a fatal mistake, and the first Governor, Sir James Sterling helping himself to the best localities to a great extent has worked very prejudicially ... Twelve hundred bales of wool only is the annual produce of the colony after being more than 20 years established; they are dependent upon other places for wheat ... Unlike the other colonies which cannot endure convicts, all hopes of the Western Australians are placed upon this class. It affords them

¹⁶ Statham, Tanner Letters, p. xxiii.

¹⁷ Brownell, "Diary", p.12.

*the only means of procuring labourers, as no emigrants now arrive.*¹⁸

Brownell's prediction proved true. His decision to move on to Van Diemen's Land was the better option for him though a great disappointment and a serious financial set-back.

¹⁸ Mackie, F., Traveller Under Concern, The Quaker Journals of Frederick Mackie On his tour of The Australian Colonies 1852-1855, (Hobart, 1973), p.275.

CHAPTER 2 - A SECOND BEGINNING

When the ship *Warrior* arrived in Hobart on 15 May 1830, Thomas Brownell was still suffering severely from an attack of dysentery. "I feel my health much impaired by my residence at Swan River and the privation of those necessities and comforts to which I am accustomed."¹⁹ It was four days before the family could disembark and take their meagre belongings to Mr. and Mrs. Dowsett of Campbell Street, Hobart. Undoubtedly the stress and disappointment of Brownell's ordeal in Swan River were the major causes for his prolonged illness until late July. However, with the resilience and optimism which would become characteristic of his life, Brownell approached the family's new start in Van Diemen's Land with enthusiasm.

*July 20th. Through mercy my health and strength are restored and I am anxious to be settled once more after wandering so far, so long. I trust I see the hand of Providence in my coming hither. By the recommendation of several friends I have been up to New Norfolk to make enquiries with the design of settling there and being satisfied of its eligibility I had taken measures accordingly.*²⁰

The dream of life on the land was nevertheless not yet to be realised, though why Brownell allowed Lieut.-Governor Arthur to talk him into a position in the Government Medical Service is not made clear in his writings.

*It so happened however, that I called upon his Excellency the Lieut.-Governor in the course of conversation mentioned my intentions of procedure in the Colony; when his Excellency was pleased to offer two situations under the Colonial Government to my consideration for acceptance. After maturely weighing the matter in unison with the friends in this Town I accepted his Excellency's offer and today (July 20th) have received my Official Appointment as an Assistant Colonial Surgeon, and Catechist: station, the Penal Settlement of Maria Island ...*²¹

¹⁹ Brownell, "Diary", p.10.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.11.

²¹ *Ibid.*

Having lost or sold all their possessions at Swan River, with illness preventing any work for income up to that date in Hobart, and owing the Dowsetts for accommodation over the past two months it is hardly surprising Dr. Brownell decided the more sensible option was to accept Arthur's offer of a paid medical job. The salary as Assistant Colonial Surgeon was 130 pounds 17 shillings 6 pence per annum, plus the supplementary Catechist's salary of 50 pounds.²² In addition a house was provided and there were allowances for rations for self, family and servant. Brownell requested an assigned female servant which was granted.²³ Not only did the position offer immediate financial security but an opportunity to save money for the elusive farm.

The diary contains only eleven brief entries regarding the Brownells' two years on Maria Island, though there is some elucidation in a letter to Elizabeth's brother, William Freeman, on 7 August 1833. The Brownell family arrived at Maria Island on 10 August 1830 aboard the *H.M. Col. Brig. Prince Leopold Kinghorn*. Upon arrival Brownell recorded, "I find considerable unpleasantness in consequence of an unhappy difference between the Commandant's and Commissioner's families."²⁴ This referred to the strained relationship between Commandant Thomas Daunt Lord and Commissariat Store-keeper Henry Cordell. There had been insinuations in late 1826 by Commissariat Clerk Thomas Lempriere that Lord tended to use convict labour for his own purposes such as carpentry work and materials in his house or gardeners around his home.²⁵ The practice continued to the consternation of the next Commissariat Clerk Henry Cordell who eventually laid charges in March 1831 against Lord for "misappropriation of government stores, prisoners and a government vessel, to improve his property "Oakhampton", at Cape Bougainville on the mainland opposite."²⁶ The dispute was at its height

²² CO 280/341, Reel 746, pp 528-540. Application for Pension.

²³ CSO 1/469/10396.

²⁴ Brownell, "Diary", p.11.

²⁵ J.R. Morris, "Early Convict History of Maria Island," *THRAPP*, Vol. 11, No. 4 (July 1964), p.166.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 168.

when the Brownells arrived but subsided with the dismissal of Cordell and his return to Hobart in early 1831. The charges against Lord were dropped and Cordell was charged with insubordination. Robert Neill was appointed as Commissariat Clerk and cordial relations returned between the top three staff members of the settlement.

As mentioned above, Brownell wrote very little about their life on Maria Island. There are a few clues which help to piece together a picture of quite a pleasant life, particularly when filled out by descriptions in Lempriere's 1826 diary. Maria Island was described by Lempriere as "one of the sweetest spots in Van Diemen's Land".²⁷ He painted a delightful picture of day to day life with delicious sociable dinners, games of whist and chess, and friendly relations with the soldiers.²⁸

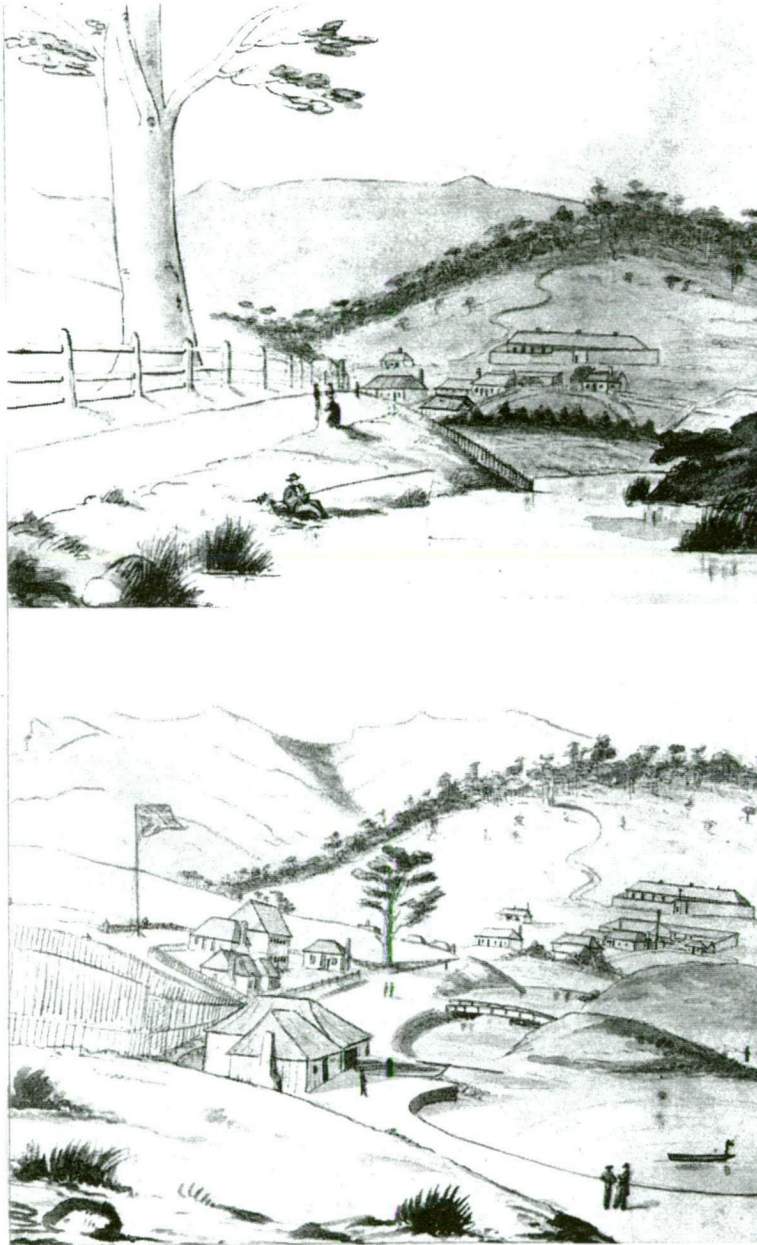
Concurring with Lempriere's views are two charming drawings of Darlington attributed to Jane Brownell (aged: 4 1/2 yrs) which reflect an Arcadian scene, not convicts and harsh punishment. (See next page). As in the drawings, an 1832 plan showed the Doctor's house as weatherboard and shingled, "24 feet by 24, which contained four rooms with a kitchen, 28 feet by 16, adjoining. It was erected in 1825."²⁹ The hospital where Dr. Brownell practiced medicine was "on a hill in the rear (of the Store) ... which could contain about twenty patients, but the fine climate of the island in general reduced the number of sick men to men who had met with accidents. ... The 52 feet by 16, log and plaster building had a shingled roof, and contained two wards, two rooms and a porch attached to the Surgery. A brick and shingled kitchen 19 feet by 14 was detached, and the whole enclosed with split paling."³⁰ Drawings and descriptions depict a substantial, civilised little settlement.

²⁷ M. Weidenhofer, Maria Island a Tasmanian Eden, (Richmond South, Victoria, 1978), p.21.

²⁸ Morris, "Early Convict History of Maria Island", pp.166-167.

²⁹ I. Brand, "The Convict Buildings of Maria Island," THRAPP, Vol. 22, No. 3, (Sept. 1975), p.133.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 134.



Two views of Darlington at the time of the first convict settlement (c. 1832). Attributed to Jane Brownell, Daughter of Dr. Thomas C. Brownell. A comparison with the chart of 1832 shows the accurate placing of the buildings depicted. (In the possession of the author, J.R. Morris, *T.H.R.A.P.P.*, Vol. 11, No. 4, July, 1964.)

Another indication of the Brownells' enjoyment of their life on Maria Island was suggested by the collection of items "gathered from the rocks and beaches in our perambulations."³¹ They consisted of "specimens of the wood, birds, shell etc."³² which they sent to relatives in England. "Among the wood are a pair of Picture Frames, and a pair of trenchers made from the root of the Light Wood Tree (Blackwood). ... The Work Box is also of Light Wood."³³ There was time and the freedom for family outings plus the pleasure of crafting gifts for loved ones at Home.

Perhaps it was the agreeable state of affairs at Maria Island which induced Brownell to stay on there rather than accept the offer of George Augustus Robinson to take the position of Surgeon at Flinders Island. On 5 March 1831 in Hobart, Robinson had discussed with Lieut.-Governor Arthur the need for a Surgeon at the establishment in the straits. Plomley believes Brownell was recommended for the duty.³⁴ Robinson called in to Maria Island on his way to Flinders Island and asked Brownell to join him. In Robinson's diary on March 10 he noted: "Maria Island - Dr. Brownell, the surgeon, declined accompanying the expedition as he had not time to prepare. Dr. Maclachlan (the dispenser at Maria Island) was ordered to go. Dr. Brownell seemed inclined to go."³⁵ Perhaps it was the time factor if Robinson was insisting that Brownell must sail with him immediately on the *Charlotte*. It would have meant quickly up-rooting the two children and Elizabeth who was three months pregnant. In a letter of 2 September 1844, Brownell wrote that he "was obliged from bad health to decline (the offer) at that time (1831)."³⁶ Nowhere is there indication of Thomas Brownell's bad health but Elizabeth had

31 Brownell, "Diary", p.15.

32 Ibid.

33 Ibid.

34 N.J.B. Plomley (ed.) Friendly Mission: The Tasmanian Journals and Papers of George Augustus Robinson 1829-1834, (Hobart, 1966), p. 451, note 122.

35 Ibid., p.321.

36 CSO8/137/2731, pp. 67-83. The Sept. 1844 letter was an application for appointment as Surgeon Superintendent at Flinders Island after the death in 1844 of Mr. Milligan's wife and his desire to resign his post. Brownell gave his reason for applying as "such an Appointment will give me the means of securing for (my large family) a suitable education." Bicheno (Colonial Secretary) replied that "no vacancy has yet occurred there." Brownell applied again on 22 Nov. 1844, to which Bicheno again replied, "The office in question is not vacant."

returned from a visit to Hobart without the children on board the *Charlotte* with Robinson on March 10, 1831.³⁷ Was her pregnancy causing health problems which would have been exacerbated by such upheaval? Such matters were not disclosed in that era.

Brownell's public service medical career continued at Maria Island but his dream of life on the land was still very much alive, as was his alertness to opportunities for financial gain. Bay whaling so popular after 1828 at established stations along the east coast naturally caught Brownell's imagination and enthusiasm as a potentially profitable investment. In 1828 the English heavy duty on imported whale oil was reduced which "encouraged a large expansion of bay whaling in the thirties."³⁸ Stations were established at Recherche Bay, Bruny Island, and near Maria Island at Swan Port and Oyster Bay. The attraction to bay whaling for black whale was stimulated by its relative ease and cheapness in comparison to sperm whale fishing at sea.

*Instead of making long voyages in vessels of considerable size, a suitable bay was selected and a station established on shore ... At the site chosen sheds were built, tryworks erected and a look-out post selected. When a whale was sighted boats put out from shore and, if successful, the whale was dragged to the beach and there cut up for boiling. After a sufficient quantity of oil had been collected it was shipped to Hobart and thence to England.*³⁹

Brownell wrote about his venture into a whaling enterprise in a letter to brother James Brownell on 12 March 1835. He referred to his last letter in which:

I find I have already given you the reasons why myself and intended partners did not carry forward our whaling operations, it was a great disappointment to our sanguine wishes and expectations but not too sanguine to over-rule our prudence, circumstances which we could not foresee and which we could not possibly control, alone prevented. A person well

³⁷ Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, p. 319.

³⁸ R.M. Hartwell, *The Economic Development of Van Diemen's Land 1820-1850*, (Melbourne, 1954), p.141.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 140-141.

*known to us all occupied the very station we should have done, and within sight of my windows took as many fish as were worth in oil and bone 3,000 pounds and that with no larger an establishment than we had arranged for. I assisted myself at the taking of some of them.*⁴⁰

That explains why Brownell applied for an allotment of ten acres at Trenby, Spring Bay which was granted on December 6, 1831. It would also appear likely that his request on 10 May 1831 for leave of absence "to arrange business of a private nature which I cannot conveniently do otherwise."⁴¹ was involved with the bay whaling scheme.

Despite Brownell's disappointment in the failure of the bay whaling venture to materialise, that loss would prove fortunate in two respects. Firstly, "by 1840 bay whaling and sealing were finished and thereafter whaling had to be conducted in larger ships, in more distant waters ... Bay whaling had been carried on in a small way by individuals or small firms; sperm whaling was the enterprise of an extensive land holder or merchant."⁴² Brownell and his partners would have had to shut down with the loss of investment in all their equipment and business. Secondly, and more importantly, Brownell's land grant for bay whaling at Spring Bay in 1831 would be transferred to a ten acre allotment for farming at Brighton in November 1833. The long awaited dream of life on the land would finally be realised.

In the intervening years Dr. Brownell pursued both his medical practice and his missionary work. It was the catechistic endeavours which at first gave him more fulfilment. As a zealous Wesleyan, Thomas Brownell was dedicated to bringing "spiritual holiness" to all men but particularly to the convicts "with a view to diffuse religious light and knowledge. I commenced today the distribution of

⁴⁰ Brownell, "Diary", p.18.

⁴¹ CSO 1/520/11328.

⁴² Hartwell, Economic Development of VDL, pp. 142-143.

religious Tracts to every habitation on the settlement, may these simple instruments be very efficient to the work assigned them."⁴³

*As there was no minister of any kind at Maria Island, I engaged at the suggestion of his Excellency the Lt.-Governor to do the duties of Catechist in the discharge of which I had everything to do that a regular Minister would have done ... I had divine service twice on the Sabbath, distributed Tracts, and kept a Sunday School for the prisoner boys. During the week two evenings were appropriated to teach an Adult School which I established soon after my arrival, and in which many learnt to read and write and cypher.*⁴⁴

Brownell came by his Methodist fervour naturally as his father John had been a devoted Wesleyan Missionary. Thomas was named in honour of Thomas Coke, Superintendent of Foreign Missions, who sent John Brownell as a Methodist Missionary to the West Indies in 1794. John's evangelical zeal developed in his early teens due to what he believed was a miraculous experience. At age eight or nine years John was severely afflicted with smallpox which left him totally blind for three years. One night John's father dreamed that if he took his son to a pond in Scarborough and bathed his eyes in the water, John's sight would be restored. The father took his young son to the pond a few times and after a number of bathings he gradually recovered perfect vision. It may have been due to minerals in the water but young John believed it was due to the Hand of God and vowed to engage in God's Work on Earth.⁴⁵

John Brownell met and married Jane Cooper at St. Kitts in 1798. Thomas Coke Brownell, their first son and second child, was born on 17 December 1800. Young Thomas grew up experiencing the sacrifices and deprivations imposed on a Missionary and his family. Rev. John Brownell's commitment was to bring the

⁴³ Brownell, "Diary", p.11.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.12.

⁴⁵ Rev. John Brownell's biographical information gleaned from "Memoir of the Late Rev. John Brownell" by the Rev. Thomas Jackson in The Wesleyan - Methodist Magazine, Vol. 46, (1823), pp. 1-6; pp. 69-76; pp. 137-144; pp. 209-218.

Gospel of Salvation to the Negroes in the West Indies. Though he insisted that Methodist Missionaries were only interested in the spiritual condition of the slaves and would not interfere with their civil condition, the white Planters were violently opposed to his preaching. Brownell was beaten, his chapel was set alight, the family had few friends and little money for even the necessities of life. Finally in December 1805 due to a letter by Brownell accusing the whites of fornication, adultery and neglect of religion,⁴⁶ three gentlemen beat, kicked and whipped the Reverend so severely he very nearly died. The resulting wound in his head made Brownell unable to bear the West Indian sun. Increasing hard labour and great privations brought on frequent attacks of illness. Mrs. Brownell continued to be seriously distressed by the attack and its aftermath. Due to the circumstances the family, now numbering four children, returned to England in 1806. Thomas aged five years would have been aware of the difficulties and hostilities endured by his parents, as well as his father's perseverance in the Wesleyan Missionaries' beliefs and duties. That perception would colour Thomas' attitude toward acceptance of privation without complaint throughout his adult life. The example set by such a dedicated and compassionate Minister father would induce two of his four sons to become ordained Ministers; while his first son Thomas would spend over ten years as a Catechist tending convicts' souls, and the whole of his working medical career tending their sick bodies.

Brownell's first few months as a catechist at Maria Island were encouraging. In September 1830 he wrote, "Great attention was manifested by all and I trust some good feeling excited by the faithful and affectionate delivery of the plain Gospel truth."⁴⁷ By August 1833 upon reflection of the past two and a half years at Penal Settlements, Brownell stated:

⁴⁶ "Extract of letter from Mr. John Brownell to Mr. Butterworth, Tortola, July 16, 1804", Wesleyan - Methodist Magazine, Vol. 28, (1805), p. 333.

⁴⁷ Brownell, "Diary", p. 11.

I have some reason to hope my labours among them have not been altogether lost, though as to the great number as well as to the great mass of the prisoner population of the Colony generally it may be with too much truth be said they are given over to a reprobate mind, working iniquity with greediness. It is true you are in the constant habit of hearing of trials and transportation and seeing the aboundings of iniquity in your great metropolis (London), but it is quite impossible you can form any adequate idea of their degradation, hardened, reprobate, lost state of mind, to everything good or clean unless you could witness their movements as a distinct class of society, in a state of transportation in these colonies and yet more especially when brought into closer contact with them in a Penal Settlement. A Christian mind cannot but be deeply pained with the sight, and feel stirred to do something for their welfare present and eternal and yet the little or non effect produced by the most anxious, unremitting and feeling exertions in their behalf, recoil with a deadening effect upon him and paralyse his best wishes and efforts.⁴⁸

Brownell's fervour was certainly dampened by two and a half years as a Catechist at Maria Island and then Port Arthur but he was still "stirred to do something for their welfare" which would attract him back to the position in twelve months time. In the meantime Dr. Brownell's Government Medical Service became the source of a serious bureaucratic wrangle between him and the Senior Colonial Surgeon James Scott.

Not a word about the dispute is mentioned in Brownell's diary which is surprising considering the strong stand he maintained against the Head of the Medical Department for well over four months. But then Brownell never mentioned any interpersonal relations with working staff or superiors perhaps due to his Wesleyan stoicism, or personal pride, or Victorian manners. Fortunately for the historian there is an extensive official file ⁴⁹ of reports and letters with accusations and defence from both Dr. Brownell and Dr. Scott, highlighted by the succinct margin

⁴⁸ Brownell, "Diary", pp. 12-13.

⁴⁹ CSO1/568/12747 All the following quotations from letters or reports related to the Scott vs. Brownell dispute are taken from this file unless otherwise noted.

notes of commentary and advice between Colonial Secretary John Burnett and Lieut.-Governor Arthur.

The problem began in November 1831 after two of Dr. Brownell's Requisitions for Medicines and Surgical Instruments sent in August and October had not been filled. Brownell wrote to Colonial Surgeon James Scott that, "Two of the Government vessels have called here (Maria Island) since they were forwarded, and the Hospital now is without almost every useful Medicine." On 27 December 1831 Commandant Lord wrote to Colonial Secretary Burnett enclosing a letter from "Assistant Colonial Surgeon Brownell representing the destitute state in which the hospital at this Settlement is placed, from the non-compliance with his Requisition for a supply of Medicines, etc."

The battle of words began. Scott denied "the apparent neglect" and claimed to have forwarded the required supplies, at the same time writing remarks on all the Requisitions questioning the necessity for some, intimating over-use of others, "Has sufficient", or "Use substitutes" on others. In addition Scott wrote a two page letter to Colonial Secretary Burnett on 31 December 1831, complaining that Brownell's "consumption of medicines is much too large and I cannot consistently with a due regard to the economy now in particular so much insisted on in the public service satisfy his requisitions without making them stand over to the regular periods." Scott went on to deny the Hospital was in a destitute state, stating that none of the ordered medicines were essential, and concluded with the statement, "if Mr. Brownell understands his profession, he had then on hand an ample supply for four or five months if expended judiciously."

The margin note from Lieut.-Governor Arthur reads, "I should wish to decline making any observation upon this letter until Mr. Brownell has had an opportunity of explaining ...". On the same date, 5 January 1832, Arthur noted on

Commandant Lord's letter (Dec. 27): "I have now the subject of the Hospital under my consideration, and I trust such delays will in future be prevented." It is interesting that Arthur appeared to support Brownell from the beginning, giving him opportunity to explain his actions, while also inferring alignment with Brownell about delays of medical supplies. From their initial meeting in 1830 there was an obvious affinity between them probably due to Brownell's sincere Wesleyan zeal and Arthur's Evangelical sympathies. It was certainly an advantage to have the Lieut.-Governor on one's side but one feels Brownell would have staunchly defended his position regardless of backers.

Arthur's requested explanation from Brownell was a five page defence of his actions against what he considered was a slanderous attack in Scott's letter of 31 December. The dispute was no longer about the supply of medicines. It was now an Affaire D'Honneur. In fact the letters took on the thrust and parry of such a duel with Arthur as Adjudicator. Brownell spent two and a half pages detailing his use of medicines and their cost. At Maria Island the Surgeon was responsible for both the convicts and the civil and Military officers and their families. During his eighteen months of service Dr. Brownell had treated 978 patients at a total cost of eight pounds, one shilling and 5 pence or:

the trifling sum of one penny, three farthings per man !!! a fact which needs no comment. I confess, Sir, I am at a loss to know the meaning of economy in the common acceptance of that term when applied to the relief of suffering humanity; or what it has to do with the treatment of disease; but if anything more like economy than the above can be substituted, I must confess myself equally ignorant of measures how.

In another letter Scott referred to Brownell's "suspected facility, or rather the good nature of the Surgeon, encouraging the complaints of Malingerers." It is true that Brownell's caring, humanitarian behaviour was noted by two convicts at Maria

Island and in later years by Martin Cash at Port Arthur.⁵⁰ As well, Brownell's diary and letters reveal a depth of compassion for his fellowmen. His letter in rebuttal to Scott's reproof has a sincerity which again gained Lieut-Governor Arthur's support:

but I would ask, Sir, His Excellency the Lieut.-Governor as a man of benevolent and humane feelings, is a prisoner of the Crown, when the subject of disease to be treated as a man, or an animal devoid of sensibilities? Does his degraded situation in the scale of Civil Society, render him less the subject of the pains and infirmities of human nature, that I am obliged to go to work in a round about way to relieve those sufferings, or leave him helpless because the means are denied me on the score of economy? Rather should not that very situation call forth our tenderest sympathies with a view if possible to arouse the dormant moral feeling that may remain in his heart?

Arthur noted: "... by the explanation afforded it would appear that Mr. Brownell had good grounds for complaining, and that the Col. Surgeon's observations of his want of economy were groundless." With the Lieut.-Governor's well-known stringent attitudes towards economy he added however "that the Col. Surgeon is justified in examining all requisitions ... with great circumspection."

Brownell saved his fiercest recriminations for the conclusion to his letter when he attacked Scott's perceived reflection on his integrity and professional skill:

I am, Sir, a Man of Peace, I would sacrifice a great deal for it and hence I cannot but strongly regret that a sense of what was due to myself as a Medical Man, and the efficient discharge of my duty to the Government in this Station should have

⁵⁰ The two Maria Island convicts were William Christmas and Robert Heath Hall. William Christmas became involved in a row over a fellow injured convict not receiving his ticket-of-leave. Dr. Brownell as the Surgeon was implicated but then excused by Christmas due to his "known humanity". Robert Heath Hall also referred to Dr. Brownell's "well-known kindness". (CSO1/591/13424).

In 1843, during Dr. Brownell's second appointment as Colonial Assistant Surgeon at Port Arthur, Martin Cash wrote in his memoirs, "My feet became dreadfully lacerated ... I was unable to walk, and consequently had to apply to the Doctor (Mr. Brownell), who, on examining my foot, observed I did very well in coming in, or in all probability I might have lost my foot. It struck me at the time that he was the first person I had seen at Port Arthur who evinced the slightest feeling of humanity."

M. Cash, The Bushranger of Van Diemen's Land in 1843-44. A Personal Narrative of his Exploits in the Bush and his Experiences at Port Arthur and Norfolk Island, (Hobart, 1929), p.52.

compelled me to make the Report to you now in question I submit to the notice of His Excellency the Lieut.-Governor whether the Colonial Surgeon has not taken advantage of his high official station to reflect upon my professional character without any just cause and in a quarter which gives it the greatest importance in the most illiberal and ungentlemanly manner."

That was Brownell's thrust home. Strong words indeed! Arthur's note read: "Transmit to Dr. Scott the answers given by Mr. Brownell. State ... that I consider that Gentleman has most satisfactorily explained his conduct and that he did not complain without proper cause."

Scott parried on 30 March 1832 with an eight page letter restating his opinion that Brownell was guilty of excessive use of medical supplies and treated too many patients with too much time and care. Scott argued that he as Head of the Medical Department had the right, indeed the duty, to control and limit medical supplies. Finally, in reference to Brownell's charge of "illiberal and ungentlemanly conduct", Scott requested that:

Mr. Brownell will apologise, most especially for the unguarded language into the use of which he has so unfortunately fallen ... The language employed makes it quite impossible that we can serve together with advantage to the Public Service unless a thorough understanding be arrived at on the subject.

Rather remarkably, Arthur at first took no notice of Scott's ultimatum. On the 12 April 1832 the Lieut.-Governor appeared tired of the whole affair, claiming he could see no cause to continue the dispute and instructing Burnett to "put up" the file.

Then on 18 April 1832 Arthur must have perused the file one last time before returning it to Burnett. On second thought he did agree that Brownell had used an "unguarded expression" albeit hastily and "he ought to express as much to satisfy

Dr. Scott's feelings." Even then Arthur appeared to express diplomacy toward Scott rather than chastisement towards Brownell.

The matter should have rested there but it would continue to haunt Brownell's association with Scott until December 1832. Scott's requested apology from Brownell appears to have become lost in bureaucratic red tape, with no such request having been officially sent to Brownell. Then Scott became embroiled in another dispute about withholding medical supplies, this time from the Port Arthur Hospital in April 1832, just when Brownell's feud was finishing. The letters and reports in CSO1/569/12811⁵¹ are an exact parallel to those of the Brownell vs. Scott file which reminded Arthur about Scott's request for an apology and eventually called into question Brownell's next appointment.

The new case erupted when once again Scott ignored Requisitions for Medical Supplies until the Port Arthur Hospital reached such a "wretched state" that another paper war began on April 2, 1832. Their plight appears to have become even more desperate than that at Maria Island: "entirely without instruments, excepting two or three rough knives ... necessitated to resort to common darning needles in closing 'sutures', ... ointments made by rendering down salt pork ... I believe, Sir, I may safely add, that unless we shortly have a supply of medicines the appellation 'medical' to this department will be entirely nominal."

Arthur instructed Scott to forward all necessary medicines by a dispatched boat "immediately". Scott did so on 4 April 1832 but sent a barbed reply to Arthur that he "should not have considered myself justified in sending this present supply had I not received the express command of His Excellency, as there is no competent person to take charge of them ..." Arthur's note reads: "Inform Dr. Scott ... (I) am most astonished at the last paragraph as (I) only directed him to prepare

⁵¹ All quotations related to Scott vs. Port Arthur Hospital are taken from file CSO1/569/12811 unless otherwise noted.

whatever he might think necessary for the immediate relief of the patients at Port Arthur. As he has thought proper to send the quantities of medicines, etc. without my authority, the responsibility of it must rest with himself." There are no further letters until 14 June 1832.

Meanwhile other decisions were being made which would bring the major antagonists back into conflict. Maria Island was to be closed down as a Penal Settlement. Arthur offered Brownell the choice of re-appointment at Richmond or Port Arthur. He accepted the latter.⁵² Arthur must have realised he now had Brownell going to Port Arthur which had so recently experienced difficulties with Scott. On 3 May 1832 Arthur asked: "Has Mr. Brownell made any reply to your communication respecting his expression toward Dr. Scott?" The Colonial Secretary wrote: "No, he could not have received the letter when this was written." Presumably "this" refers to Brownell's letter accepting the Port Arthur appointment.

On June 14th Scott answered a letter from Arthur referring Scott to a recent requisition from the Port Arthur Commandant Capt. John Mahon for medical supplies. Scott answered: "The Requisition appears ill assorted, there has been no medical officer on the spot, and many of the articles are such as I should be very unwilling to entrust to the care of any other than a Medical Officer."⁵³ Arthur's note read: "Say that the Medical Officer from Maria Island will proceed there forthwith but, still sticking plaster and the most common medicines should be furnished without delay." It is interesting that Arthur did not use Brownell's name. Was Arthur trying to avoid mentioning Brownell until an apology had been received by Scott? Without an apology there was certain to be renewed aggression from Scott over Brownell's appointment to Port Arthur.

⁵² CSO1/587/13333.

⁵³ CSO1/569/12811 Again all following quotes are from this file until otherwise noted.

One month later Arthur again noted: "I have not yet seen the reply from Mr. Brownell alluded to in my memorandum above." The Colonial Secretary Burnett directly beneath noted: "Let me know if any reply has been received?"

The anticipated response from Scott arrived on 31 July 1832: "With reference to ... me intimating to Asst. Surgeon Brownell to hold himself in readiness to proceed to Port Arthur, I have the heavy responsibility to inquire whether that gentleman has ever expressed his regret for the improper language used by him towards me in the exercise of my official duty as particularly pointed out in my letter of the 30th March last." Note in side margin by Colonial Secretary. "He never has done so."

The notes now flew thick and fast between 7 August and 12 October 1832. Arthur asked Burnett to inquire whether Brownell had sent an apology to Scott by 9 August 1832. Burnett eventually realised he had never sent a request to Brownell for an apology to Scott. Finally on 12 October 1832 Arthur noted that Brownell had called by and "I have suggested he had better address an explanatory letter to the Col. Surgeon." In all those months Brownell must have been aware that an apology to his Superior Officer was being demanded by Scott and was considered *de rigueur*. Or was Arthur's continued support and offer of a choice of positions at Richmond or Port Arthur enough to let Brownell believe he had nothing to answer for? Brownell's pride could well have been his undoing in the political and military regime of the Colony. Without Arthur's backing Brownell would have been ousted by Scott from the Public Medical Service and would have lost the source of security for most of his working life. Friends in high places were important in the Colonies. Brownell was fortunate to have Arthur onside.

There does not appear to be any official correspondence related to an apology but as Brownell took up his appointment at Port Arthur in October 1832 it would seem likely that he did apologise. Scott managed to get a bit of his own back when

Brownell applied to Colonial Secretary John Burnett in November 1832 for a rise in salary of two shillings and six pence per diem at Port Arthur. Brownell's justifications for the increase were that he was in his third year of residence at a Penal Settlement; he had an increasing family; and he was "necessarily subjected to many privations (at Port Arthur) which other Asst. Surgeons know nothing of, and having I believe an equal quantum of duty to discharge."⁵⁴

Burnett referred the application to the Colonial Surgeon James Scott "to whom (it) should have been sent in the first instance." Brownell obviously hoped to by-pass his recent foe. (See Appendix II - Description of James Scott). Scott refused the pay rise stating that privations at Port Arthur and Maria Island were few in comparison to Macquarie Harbour. Brownell had agreed to his present salary and he received extra pay for his Catechist's duties. Therefore Scott did not believe Brownell had cause for complaint. This time Arthur backed Scott and agreed on 19 December 1832 that "Mr. Brownell's salary cannot be increased."⁵⁵

Brownell's complaint of many privations at Port Arthur was not just petty carping, no such remarks had been made about life at Maria Island. Port Arthur in 1832 was still very primitive. The houses generally were small of rough wood with no difference in standard of accommodation offered to superior officers or overseers. Thomas Lempriere wrote that their house did not have "a single window or door wind or water tight; ... the whole having been built of green wood every door and window has shrunk, in fact the quarter is quite unfit for the residence of any Officer of the Department."⁵⁶ James Sly, overseer of shoemakers, described the hut in which he and his wife lived as only 13 ft. x 9 ft.: "The place we lay in was only 4 1/2 ft. long and 3 ft. wide."⁵⁷ Such cramped and rudimentary quarters in

⁵⁴ CSO1/587/13333.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Glover, M., "Aspects of the Life of Port Arthur Officials. A Preliminary Outline", National Parks and Wildlife Service, Tasmania (Unpublished, 1984), p.20.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

the wet and windy Port Arthur climate would have proved difficult and unhealthy for Brownell's pregnant wife Elizabeth and their three young children.

Elizabeth Brownell is thought to have been amongst the first, if not the first, women at Port Arthur; and the three Brownell children (Jane 4 1/2 years, James 3 1/2 years, Mary 1 year) were the first ones recorded though some of the military may have had children at the Penal Settlement before October 1832.⁵⁸ With no female companionship, very infrequent mails from home, and a much rougher class of convict, Elizabeth's life must have been lonely and unpleasant. At Maria Island Elizabeth had a female servant, at Port Arthur she shared an invalid male servant with Robert Neill, the Commissariat Officer, who occupied the other side of the Brownells' semi-detached house.⁵⁹

Brownell was kept very busy with 280-300 convicts plus the civil and military staff to look after. In addition there was his work as a Catechist, and Adult School two evenings per week. By January 1833:

*finding I could not conscientiously continue to hold the office of Catechist in connection with my other professional duties, I resigned it; and in a few weeks the Rev. Mr. Manton, Wesleyan Missionary from Macquarie Harbour arrived at the Station, and took upon him that office.*⁶⁰

There was no house for Rev. Manton when he arrived so the Brownells provided a room for him in their small over-crowded residence.⁶¹ Thomas Brownell and John Manton became life-long friends, visiting each other and corresponding through their later years. The Brownells named their fifth daughter Emily Manton in honour of their friend.

⁵⁸ Glover, M., "Aspects of the Life of Port Arthur Officials. A Preliminary Outline," p.16.

⁵⁹ Ibid., There were no listed female assigned servants at Port Arthur until July 1833.

⁶⁰ Brownell, "Diary", p.11.

⁶¹ People and Port Arthur, Department of Education and the Arts Tasmania, Australia, and The Port Arthur Historic Site Management Authority, (1990), p.32.

Dr. Brownell continued his medical duties at Port Arthur until April 25, 1833, when personal problems evidently reached breaking point. He had mentioned privations back in November 1832 and again in his pension application he stated the reason for resigning: "on account of illness of my wife. The station not affording the necessary comforts that her state required."⁶² Whether Elizabeth was experiencing a difficult pregnancy is not specifically mentioned but the primitive conditions of the settlement would certainly not have made it easy for her.

However, there is another clue to the Brownells' problems in George Augustus Robinson's diary entry for 13 March 1833 when he dined with Dr. Brownell and Rev. Manton at Port Arthur:

Mr. Manton complains very much of the treatment he has received from the superintendent; Dr. Brownell complained of the treatment of the commandant. These feelings are sure to rise in small communities, especially when the officer commanding does not devote that attention to the wants of the civil officers that their various necessities require. Dr. Brownell has sent in his resignation. I have invariably found that the civil officers complain of harsh treatment attendant upon their situation. I think every comfort ought to be afforded to civil officers at penal settlements to make the contrast as striking and as great as possible. It is a mistaken notion to endeavour to make the civil officers uncomfortable. Neither ought there to be so great a distinction between the chief and subordinate officers.⁶³

Nowhere else is there mention of antagonism between Brownell and Commandant Lieut. J. Gibbons or the very newly appointed Charles O'Hara Booth. As Robinson is writing in March 1833 it was probably Booth. It is mentioned in Booth's Profile 26 in People and Port Arthur that his treatment of convicts was severe but just - too severe for the Doctor who saw the physical results of such punishment? Booth was also accused of being insensitive about individual problems in treating all prisoners equally. That insensitivity may have carried over

⁶² CO280/341/Reel 746, pp. 528-540.

⁶³ Plomly, N.J.B. (ed.), Friendly Mission, p. 708.

to his administration and relationship with military and civil officers of the Settlement. It is noted that the Medical Officer, Cornelius Casey, found Booth high-handed and peremptory which rather accords with Robinson's inference. Brownell only writes in his diary, "In March (1833) following a combination of circumstances conspired to induce me to leave the Colonial Surgency and having sent in my resignation to the Government, I left Port Arthur 25 April 1833 and arrived in Hobart Town the same day."⁶⁴ No clues given there.

Thus ended another chapter of Thomas Coke Brownell's life as an immigrant to the Colonies. After three years in the Government Medical Service plus his dedicated work as Catechist and Lecturer he had put aside enough money to set himself up in private practice in Hobart Town. His wife and family would have a life among civilised society, he would be independently employed, and the prospects of a successful medical practice brought his dream of owning a farm back into focus.

⁶⁴ Brownell "Diary", p. 11.

CHAPTER 3 - THE DREAM

The next six years would prove to be the most satisfying and the most disappointing in Thomas Coke Brownell's efforts to establish an independent career. First a private medical practice in Hobart would hopefully add funds to his savings. Those funds could then be used to settle his family on a farm and to realise the dream which had brought them to the Colonies. That dream of landed independence attracted many emigrants. Tragically the struggle to make a success of farming often proved far beyond their capacities. Brownell's story is typical of many such middle-class settlers.

On 7 June 1833 an announcement was printed in the Hobart Town Courier:

*Thomas Coke Brownell, Member of the Royal College of Surgeons, respectfully announces that he has commenced practice in Brisbane Street near the Independent Chapel.*⁶⁵

The comment in the diary for that date is: "I commenced the practice of my profession this day in Hobart Town having been disappointed in my previous intentions in reference to Agricultural pursuits in the District of New Norfolk."⁶⁶

When Brownell arrived in Van Diemen's Land in 1830 he should have applied for a Land Grant to replace the Swan River grant of 1200 acres. He wrote about finding suitable land at New Norfolk but then decided to accept Arthur's offer of an appointment as Colonial Assistant Surgeon to Maria Island. Brownell neglected to pursue a Land Grant at that time, later explaining that like numerous other settlers he never dreamt of Grants being restricted. By the time Brownell applied the British Government had put a stop to issuing Land Grants. He was one month

⁶⁵ Hobart Town Courier
⁶⁶ Brownell, "Diary" p.11.

too late to claim the original 1200 acres.⁶⁷ Fortunately he still held title to the ten acre allotment at Spring Bay. Arthur agreed to transfer that Grant to Brownell's choice in another township. In November 1833 Brownell applied to Surveyor-General George Frankland to transfer his Trenby, Spring Bay allotment intended for bay whaling to another ten acre allotment.⁶⁸

I selected an allotment at Brighton being the nearest Township to Hobart Town where land was to be had, the main road across the Colony then running through it, and within 300 yds. of my land. There being also good population around, offered some opportunity for doing a little practice, and I had some reason to hope that the office of District Assistant Surgeon under Government might after a while fall to my lot there.⁶⁹

Until the transfer was approved Brownell continued in private medical practice in Hobart. Later that year Brownell wrote:

By July (1834) I had been rather more than a year resident in Hobart Town endeavouring to establish myself in my profession and expending all my savings of the three years I had been at the penal settlements under government. Finding my capital was nearly exhausted and I was unable to get in any monies to carry on with, though I could have had practice enough if fresh air would have sustained me, I thought it time to look out for something else. As there was a great depression in the Colony, a failing harvest, and every kind of supply very dear, money was scarce, I again looked toward the Government source of employment as affording sure pay, for a situation of some kind or other.⁷⁰

Again Brownell's experience was typical of the time. In the 1830's private doctors could not provide services comparable with those offered by the Convict Department doctors. They had no access to hospital patients nor to drugs as there were no retail pharmacists. Settlers who could pay for treatment chose reputable

⁶⁷ Brownell, "Diary", p.17.

⁶⁸ LSD 1/106 pp. 6-17.

⁶⁹ Brownell, "Diary", p.34.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

doctors in the Medical Department. The poor were also treated by the Department.⁷¹ Brownell's diary confirms that private practitioners were forced either to obtain an appointment in the Government Medical Service or become farmers or traders while practicing medicine part-time.

Brownell did not apply for a medical position but rather approached the Rural Dean Rev. Palmer on 11 April 1834 for re-appointment as a Catechist and Lecturer to Convicts. The Rural Dean strongly recommended Brownell:

*from his exemplary good character, and general deportment, and above all, from his views of, and acquaintance with, the Sacred Scriptures, he is, in my humble judgement, eminently qualified in every point of view to render that assistance which is so much called for.*⁷²

Brownell was appointed in July 1834 as Catechist and Lecturer at 100 pounds per annum to the Chain Gang at Bridgewater (Grantton). The prisoners were employed in building a Causeway and a Bridge across the River Derwent.

It is interesting to contemplate how much forethought Brownell had engaged in prior to that move. With his close association with the Hobart Methodists was Brownell alerted to the need for Catechists at both the Grass Tree Hill and Bridgewater Chain Gangs? Governor Arthur would insist that a Catechist must live in the vicinity of the Gang.⁷³ Was Brownell aware of that fact and chose his 10 acres at Brighton accordingly? The end result was a successful plan to escape from private medical practice "having always lost more than I gained by it",⁷⁴ to be able to cultivate his little farm, and also have the security of 100 pounds per annum from Catechistic endeavours which gratified his missionary zeal. Life took on a

⁷¹ Rimmer, W.G., Portrait of a Hospital, The Royal Hobart, (Hobart, 1981), pp. 55-56.

⁷² CSO 1/733/15885.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Brownell, "Diary", p.17.

rosy glow for the Brownells as Thomas' lengthy letters to family and friends waxed lyrical about:

finding more comfort and satisfaction in my little farm than in feeling pulses, and have no doubt it will pay much better. The whole of it is good soil, capable of growing anything, and though in its original state of nature, will be easily cleared and brought under the plough this year. It will far more than maintain my family which is an object of some importance Our prospect is open and picturesque, and very healthy. The site of my allotment is a gentle declivity, a little to the rear is a pretty mount or hill, more backward a high and steep range of hills. As the mount would be included in the allotment (10 acres) to the south of mine which I have nominally agreed for the purchase of, I have named my little property Mount Coke.⁷⁵ ... I would not exchange my situation just now with any Country Squire in England of 500 pounds a year.⁷⁶

Brownell's optimism and pleasure regarding his new occupation did not wane over the next two years through long hours of arduous labour on the farm "from sunrise to sunset, my hands and my head are occupied in the cultivation of my little farm"; coupled with his Catechist and Lecturer duties for the Government, "from tea to bedtime I am preparing for my Sunday Services and on the Sabbath I have to read prayers and preach twice, walk 9 miles, cross the River Derwent, and conduct Adult School among my prisoner congregation."⁷⁷ In addition, Brownell had "a service on Wednesday afternoon and attended the school the same evening and also on Friday. Indeed the school is held every evening (attended by an educated convict when Brownell was not rostered on), in which we teach convicts to read, write and cipher as far as the first four rules of arithmetic go."⁷⁸ His letters were full of stories related to agricultural blunders and mishaps, described rather boyishly with no complaints, and always enthusing over the family's good health

⁷⁵ Brownell, "Diary", p.19.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p.18.

⁷⁷ Ibid., pp.20-21.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p.19.

and the bright economic future as a farmer. Brownell even encouraged his relatives to emigrate despite the restrictions on land grants:

There are always farms to sell, so that a person having a little capital in hand might often suit himself to a comfortable little property. When we consider how little is necessary to supply food and raiment and thereby place a person above want, we see the advantage of a little settlement in these colonies over the uncertainty of trade and commerce, especially to a person of limited means.⁷⁹

Brownell's enthusiasm and pride in discovering the skills required for his new life shine through his letters sent home. In August 1834 he took lodgings in Brighton and began to clear his land and build a permanent residence. Brownell wrote that with the assistance of one assigned convict, they constructed "a comfortable stone cottage containing 4 rooms and passage ... We propose building an out kitchen etc. by and by."⁸⁰ In 1837 Elizabeth Brownell wrote to her mother, "You would be surprised to see what he can do as a Mechanic since we came to the Colony, either in wood or stone or brickwork. He seems to have a natural talent for doing anything the force of circumstances may call into operation."⁸¹

As all the Brownells' savings had been expended on the private medical practice, where did the funds come from to buy materials and tools to build the house, for fencing, and agricultural equipment?

It has been done by the kind and generous assistance of some of our wealthy Methodists in Hobart Town among whom I have lived upon good terms, and in whose estimation I have every reason to believe I stand fair ... Three friends [John Hiddlestone, John Barrett and Esh Lovell]⁸² advanced me a loan of 120 pounds to assist the building, for which I gave them security on the property

⁷⁹ Brownell, "Diary", p.17.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p.31.

⁸² Glover, M., "Life Styles - A Biography of Thomas Coke Brownell, Wesleyan Minister at Port Arthur", National Parks and Wildlife Service, Tasmania, (Unpublished, 1984), p.11.

*and paid twelve and one-half percent interest the rate of discount presently common in the Colony upon renewed bills ... To meet this I shall mortgage the property for a term of years, at an easy interest and pay it off by degrees.*⁸³

The family moved into the cottage in November 1834 by which time Brownell had planted three quarters of an acre in front of it for a garden of vegetables and fruit trees as well as flowers and shrubs. The remarkably good health of the Brownells' eleven children experienced from youth into adulthood can probably be attributed to Brownell's concern for the nutrition of his family. His letters always alluded to the importance of the home garden (vegetables & fruit), poultry (eggs & meat) and goats (milk) when describing his crops and stock.

*One acre is devoted to homestead and gardening. My poultry will yield nothing this season, beyond family consumption, proving too destructive to my wheat to increase them much. My stock of goats are increasing from 3 to 6, and by Christmas (1835) will probably double again, so that in a little time we shall have not only plenty of milk, but also butter from them. My swinish department is also on increase. In number 3 sows and 1 boar, they are too young to give me any return for 5 months at least. By and bye they will keep us in meat year round, as we are no Jews.*⁸⁴

While building the house Brownell and his servant managed to clear and plant three acres with potatoes:

*for which I hope to realise 20 tons, which are generally worth about five pounds per ton, if the early frosts don't cut them off ... The season which now lies before us will I trust in due course bring a superabundance of wheat, potatoes, barley, turnips, etc. with all the blessings of plenty from our own industry and resources. It is the day of small things, with hard labour, incidental to first settling on new land, yet we are progressing, and a little time and patience with the blessing of a kind and overruling Providence will, I doubt not, enlarge our borders and our substance.*⁸⁵

⁸³ Brownell, "Diary", p.19 & p.34.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p.21.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p.17 & p.19.

It was not the early frosts but rather the very dry summer which caused that first crop of potatoes to fail. Despite the disappointment Brownell maintained his optimism and redoubled his efforts. By the spring of 1835 they had the entire ten acres in cultivation and enclosed by fencing. Brownell planted three acres in potatoes which "promised well" by December, and six acres in wheat which were "waving in the breeze".⁸⁶ They had the prospect of plenty.

One must certainly admire Brownell for his stamina and persistence in maintaining the many hours devoted to his Catechistic work, practicing medicine in the neighbourhood when cases offered, while at the same time managing in less than 18 months to clear 10 acres, fence it, plough and plant it, and build a home for his family. All that with the assistance of only one servant who may not have been of great help as by February 1836 Brownell wrote, "I have been obliged to part with Lawler at last. He became so unhinged in his mind and unstable in his conduct that I lost confidence in him and transferred him to another Master. The man I now (1836) have is a thorough farmer and hitherto does very well."⁸⁷ The early settlers often found their assigned convict servants more of a burden than a help, both Lawler and Mrs. Brownell's female servant, Caroline, seem to be typical examples of such problems. Mrs. Brownell wrote to her mother saying most of the women servants were useless which resulted in much more work for the mistress of the house in the colonies than in England. The Tanner letters urged prospective emigrants to bring their own servants as the local girls were "so bad". Louisa Ann Meredith wrote that women convict servants had to be watched constantly. "Their personal habits were frequently filthy and disgusting, yet they were entrusted with the care of the children and the preparation of most of the family's food."⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Brownell, "Diary", p.23.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p.26.

⁸⁸ Rae-Ellis, V., Louisa Ann Meredith, A Tigress in Exile, (Hobart, 1990), p.112.

Frederick Mackie wrote about the theft of spoons, knives and food plus frequent smashing of crockery, all of which could be a serious expense to the family. The convicts' faults and foibles must have often outweighed the benefits of their free labour.

A January 1836 letter to Joseph Hardey (from the *Tranby*) in Swan River was full of positive expectations about the approaching harvest. The wheat would do "tolerably well". The potatoes had been grown by a new method which Brownell was proud of; and he was expecting "a good return". He had grown mangle wurzels, swedes, turnips and cabbages for the pigs. It seems his former plan to buy 10 acres adjoining his allotment had now changed to one of renting a neighbouring farm of 30 acres. "It is watered by the Jordan River and will be a fine place for geese and ducks." Brownell had not yet procured any sheep but believed they were profitable when space and time allowed.

An assessment of the December 1835 state of trade in the Colony was not so cheerful. Brownell wrote to his sister-in-law that there was:

*a want of confidence and a scarcity in the circulating medium bordering on despair. It is thought however that in a month or two when harvest is over and wheat and other produce are turned into the market it will produce a reaction. The new chartered Bank, lately arrived and which commences on the 1st of January next (1836), will throw a good deal more money into circulation, and by reducing the rate of interest from 10 to 8 percent, afford considerable relief in the operations of trade. The Bankruptcies and Sales by Auction have been unparalleled in the history of the Colony. Every man looks upon his neighbour with suspicion.*⁸⁹

It was "the unprincipled conduct of a neighbour" which caused a major upheaval in the Brownells' life and turned their dream into a nightmare. For some time the

⁸⁹ Brownell, "Diary", p.23.

Brownells had been "much annoyed with the neighbour's cattle breaking in and damaging our crops, and were sometimes obliged to impound the cattle in self-defence. Their owners appeared quite indifferent to any damage they did as long as they got their bellies filled."⁹⁰ Then in April 1836 the neighbour, "an unprincipled fellow and his wife", Mr. & Mrs. Simcoe took Brownell to court where he was committed for trial for having "unlawfully, maliciously and feloniously poisoned two pigs."⁹¹ Brownell was obliged to give bail and defend the action. "For this purpose I employed Counsel which involved heavy expense in this Colony. The case was not tried, as the Attorney-General who discharges the duties of Grand Jury, threw out the information, declaring there was no case."⁹² Despite the outcome it was a distressing experience for an honourable man like Brownell. He believed the local Police Magistrate had defamed the Brownell name by siding with the dishonest neighbours. Brownell claimed he would have brought a civil action for defamation against the Magistrate if his case had been tried. Here was another example of Brownell's sense of honour and pride so typical of the period.

Another serious concern was the loss of his Government appointment and income during the committal and trial. When Brownell was first charged the Rural Dean Rev. Palmer discontinued his services as Catechist and appointed Mr. Abraham Biggs to replace Brownell "until the result of his trial may be known."⁹³ Once the trial was aborted, Brownell was re-employed, "the Government declaring I had suffered nothing in their estimation."⁹⁴ That outcome was doubly important as it reinstated Brownell's appointment, his income, and his honour.

⁹⁰ Brownell, "Diary", p.34.

⁹¹ CSO 44/2/15885 p.412.

⁹² Brownell, "Diary", p.34.

⁹³ CSO 44/2/15885 p.412.

⁹⁴ Brownell, "Diary", p.27.

The Brownells' friends advised them to leave Brighton, the scene of such unpleasantness. Brownell's Catechistic duties were heavy and it would be sensible to live on the same side of the River Derwent as the Chain Gang. Also the Brownell family was increasing, with six children by then, and a larger property could produce increased income from a larger range of crops and livestock. Brownell took his friends' advice and found a property for sale at Blacksnake (Granton) of 40 acres with the Blacksnake Rivulet as the front boundary. Writing in September 1836 to his brother-in-law, William Freeman, to ask for a loan Brownell listed the property's many advantages:

a short distance from Town, to which produce of every description can be conveyed without the risk, delay or expense of crossing ferries. There is no medical man within miles on either side of it. It is half a mile only from Bridgewater where the gang of prisoners are stationed ... Lastly the Government being now engaged at this very place in the greatest Colonial undertaking that has been, or can be carried on, the constructing a causeway and bridge across the Derwent, ⁹⁵ so as to open a direct communication between the two seaport Towns of the Colony and cross the entire extent of the Island ... Bringing the whole traffic of the Colony on the line of this road to travel to and from Hobart Town, held out the certain prospect of rendering my property in the neighbourhood of it very valuable in a little time, and I came to the conclusion of buying it ... The price asked and paid for is 262 pounds 10 shillings - a very low sum all things considered.⁹⁶

Low as that sum might have been, the Brownells had insufficient resources available. They had recently suffered a series of losses. First, that wheat "waving in the breeze" developed smut and only produced 70 bushels instead of 180. They sold 40 bushels and kept the rest for family consumption, but Brownell only realised 15 pounds rather than the anticipated 58 pounds 10 shillings. Then the

⁹⁵ Brownell explained that the works at Bridgewater had been in operation six years. Many believed the causeway would never be established due to its "so frequently sinking into the mud flat over which it passes for half a mile." Now it had been finished to a point which allowed Governor Arthur to open it on Oct. 17, 1836. Property values rose. "Robinson at the Blacksnake Inn laid out his property in allotments ... which sold for 8,000 pounds." Moores ferry was given up and the bridge toll let to Murdochs for 485 pounds per annum. Brownell, "Diary", p.27 and 29.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.27.

"promising potatoes" produced a measly crop due to poor quality seed stock, nevertheless Brownell expected about 100 pounds for them. Misfortune struck again:

In May I had to visit Town remaining several days to obtain an interview with the (Blacksnake) proprietor. During my absence my man was entrusted to get up the potatoes. To work he went, thinking to do wonders in my absence. Without a single individual to pick up after him, ploughed up the whole 3 acres. There they lay upon the ground exposed, and a most severe and unusual frost coming on lasting 3 nights, almost every potato was spoilt. It was a most abundant season for potatoes all over the Colony. They fell to 3 pounds a ton in price. I sold one and a half tons and kept another, making my income that year from 10 acres of ground 19 pounds 10 shillings. Was not this noble!!!⁹⁷

On top of those losses were the costs of the Court case and his Government wages deducted while the case was in train. Their financial situation was grim. Once again the Brownells' Methodist friends stepped in to assist. Believing it would be a pity to miss so good an offer, they handsomely united and paid for Blacksnake:

It was purchased for 250 guineas and mortgaged to (Hiddlestone, Barrett and Lovell) for 200 guineas, 50 to be cash down to the seller and the 200 by a bill at 12 months for which they were responsible 10 percent interest. I (then) sold the Brighton property for 210 pounds, paid off the (original) 120 pound loan, and 90 pounds towards liquidating other claims.⁹⁸

In order to repay the Methodists quickly and give Brownell a better financial arrangement, his friends had suggested that he borrow money in England to the advantage of both the borrower and lender, giving security upon the property. Brownell therefore approached his well-to-do Freeman brother-in-law for a loan of 250 guineas at 8 percent per annum and the security of a mortgage upon the property. Brownell gave the name of Mr. George Hull of Tolosa, "a most

⁹⁷ Brownell, "Diary", p.35.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

respected gentleman of character and property", who was known to the three Methodists and was an acquaintance of William Freeman as well, to act for him. Brownell hoped to repay the loan in three years," as I hope in that period we should be able to get the farm into such a state of improvement as to more than pay it."⁹⁹ Whether William Freeman never received Brownell's letter or simply chose to ignore it, can only be conjectured, as no mention is ever made of the request again. The only other note regarding his brother-in-law is a single line: "1841 - July 15 - Received a letter from Mr. W.M. Freeman of London".¹⁰⁰

On 7 July 1836 the Brownells moved to Blacksnake. Brownell's building skills were called upon once more. There was only the shell of a log cabin comprising five rooms; it required weather boarding, flooring, ceilings, doors and windows, plus an out kitchen to be built. Five acres had been cultivated but were now very overgrown. Brownell was already late for planting wheat so hired a second man servant, an expense he could ill afford. They managed to get five acres planted half in wheat, half in potatoes. Serious drought followed. Brownell reaped five bushels of wheat, "just the seed I put in", and as many potatoes as kept the family for a year. To add to their financial woes, shortly after they moved to Blacksnake their female servant left a heavy washing of clothes out all night. "Every article was swept away (down the Blacksnake Rivulet?), not leaving a change of body linen to any of the family. Here was another loss of about 30 pounds."¹⁰¹

In the face of all the losses and disappoints, Brownell adamantly repeated in his letters that he would not return to medicine, nor would he consider returning to England to practice as a Surgeon. Instead in early 1837 Brownell applied to establish a Government School for his local neighbourhood with himself and

⁹⁹ Brownell, "Diary", p.27.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p.38.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p.35.

Elizabeth as School Master and School Mistress. They had signed up well over the required number of children,¹⁰² had strong recommendations from the resident Magistrate and the Chaplain of the District, but had to provide a school room. Brownell built it himself, which Elizabeth wrote to her mother was "a good schoolroom with stone fireplace, to the astonishment and praise of everyone around."¹⁰³ The salary was 75 pounds per annum plus 25 pounds for school rent which along with the Catechist salary gave a total of 200 pounds per annum. Brownell now "determined to run no further risks by launching out further in farming, but to discharge the second man, to live as carefully, and clothe as little beyond actual decency as possible, and wipe off month by month as much as our salary would allow of old arrears."¹⁰⁴

Following that stringent approach, Brownell only planted the five cultivated acres, leaving the other thirty-five acres uncleared until finances improved. Four acres went into wheat, a quarter acre into potatoes, a patch of oats and, as always, vegetables for the family. Smut again attacked the wheat. The harvest produced twenty-six bushels instead of 120 bushels. The price of wheat fell to five shillings a bushel. Brownell barely realised his expenses.

At the same time (Feb. 1838) the Blacksnake property mortgage came up for renewal. Mr. Francis Horner took over the 228 pounds 5 shillings mortgage at the very high interest rate of 15 percent.¹⁰⁵ Brownell wrote: "To relieve myself from the mortgage and other heavy interest connected with it, as well as effectually to

102 The Free Public School System was set-up under Arthur using Dr. Bell's National System. It was non-denominational though administered through the Anglican Church with simple religious instruction based on the Scriptures. Government grants allowed poor children free admission. Parents gave voluntary contributions. 20 children were required for a township school. Master's salary was 50 pounds, Mistress salary was 25 pounds, plus 25 pounds rent for a schoolroom. Robson, L., A History of Tasmania, Vol. 1, Van Diemen's Land from the Earliest Times to 1855, (Melbourne, 1983), pp. 127-130. Phillips, D., Making More Adequate Provision, (Tasmania, 1985), pp. 10-19.

103 Brownell, "Diary", p.31.

104 Ibid., p.35.

105 Glover, M., "Lifestyles - A Biography of T.C. Brownell," p.12.

disburse all claims, I propose in a few weeks to sell the property, and then take it at a rental. Thus acting, if I am spared to see the end of the year, I shall be able to fulfil the Apostles' injunction 'Owe no man anything but love'."¹⁰⁶

With the income from the school, the Catechistic work, and occasional medical cases, Brownell managed to wipe off some debt and believed by October 1838 he had "now got the arrears into a very manageable compass." Optimism was still in evidence but scepticism was creeping in as Brownell wrote to his brother William, "In my farming operations my prospect this season wears a brighter hue, though many a sun shining morning wears a gloomy evening face."¹⁰⁷ He had decided to substitute English barley for wheat. Barley had done well locally, produced a larger crop, and was not subject to blight. His crops consisted of four and a half acres of barley and half an acre of oats. It is apparent Brownell did study his agricultural problems and attempted to correct his methods according to available information. A scientific approach to farming was still in its infancy in Britain and was even farther behind in the Colonies.¹⁰⁸ In September 1835 Brownell mentioned in a letter to his brother William, "I have not received the agricultural work you promised to send ... and shall be glad of any horticultural work you may lay your hands upon."¹⁰⁹ Nevertheless Brownell did keep up with local views on new techniques. Another one and a half acres had now been cleared and ploughed for potatoes again by the new method he used the previous year.

Then another financial blow threatened to shatter their dream. Government and Church policies were introduced regarding:

*prospects for the school and my catechistical duties at
Bridgewater (which) are not only cloudy but of a precarious*

¹⁰⁶ Brownell, "Diary", p.35.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ Morgan, S., Land Settlement in Early Tasmania, (Cambridge, 1992), p.77.

¹⁰⁹ Brownell, "Diary", p.20.

character. New Governors frequently introduce new measures in their zeal to do something fresh, which do much harm, and unsettle many measures of tried benefit. Such is the present position of affairs in our Colonial Kingdom in the Ecclesiastical and School Departments. Many parts of the Colony have hitherto been supplied with religious instruction on the Sabbath by means of Catechists who acting as lay preachers of the Established Church, on the Sabbath only, have supplied the deficiency of Ordained Clergyman. By a new measure not one of these will be employed after 1 January next year (1839), myself and two other Wesleyans forming the only exception because we are connected with gangs of prisoners, but we are to be reduced in salary. Hence, unfortunately, I am to have only 50 pounds instead of 100 pounds if required at all. The continuation of the school in this neighbourhood is equally uncertain. There are so many changes proposed and such an alteration in the mode of meeting the expenses connected with them, that instead of increasing the number, it is thought most of the new measures will destroy most of the schools now in existence. The two (salaries) at 150 pounds may keep me, wife, servant and 6 bairns in bread and water until something better opens for us, but you will perceive that if either fails, we shall have to cut our cables and run.¹¹⁰

Still adamant that he would not return to medical practice, Brownell realistically looked at other opportunities for supporting his growing family once he knew about the new policies and realised that the Chain Gang would be moved on at the fast approaching completion of the Causeway. As an active Methodist he was well aware of the severe shortage of Ordained Ministers. In the past Brownell had contemplated life as a cleric but "my constitutional temperament has always been opposed to it, though the bias of my mind has ever been in favour of Literary Theological pursuits."¹¹¹ Now Brownell turned to the ministry as a satisfactory

¹¹⁰ Brownell, "Diary", p.36. Archdeacon Hutchins' letter of 21 June 1839 set out new terms: salary reduced to 50 pounds and only 3 Wesleyans retained as Catechists. (CSO 44/2/3024). Perhaps the new policy was related to the Church Act of November 1837, as an Anglican Church reaction against the Act.

Gov. Franklin's School regulations of 25 Sept. 1839 stated in part: Free Day Schools would be administered by a Board of Education; the British and Foreign School System would be introduced; 20 children would be required for a township school; the parents would pay fees one month in advance, with a pound for pound contribution from the Government. (Hobart Town Gazette, 25 Sept. 1839). There would be evasion of fees by parents, unable or unwilling to pay. The Master would be compelled to take children in free to secure their attendance which obtained the Government grant. Without parents' fees the school would operate at a loss and close.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

solution to his problems. He made an official application to the Archdeacon of Van Diemen's Land, William Hutchins, to be admitted to Ordination as a Minister of the Established Church. The application had to be approved by the Lord Bishop of Australia in Sydney. Instead of forwarding Brownell's application to the Bishop, Archdeacon Hutchins merely sent word that he had his letter. Brownell wrote: "(Hutchins) may have recommended or not, as much rests with him, but it is clear that the Bishop would have been much better able to form an opinion of me if he had been put in possession of my history and feelings in reference to religion and the ministry in my own language. My opinion is, it will not be entertained. The Bishop is a High Churchman and opposed to Dissent, to a fault, though there is a great want of ministers in many parts of the Colony".¹¹² Ever the optimist, Brownell "rubbed up my Greek and Latin Testament" over the next few months to be prepared if the Bishop should look favourably upon his application. He had put aside 30 pounds for the fare to Sydney and tentatively planned to be away about one month. No further mention is made in the diary of the application. Brownell's opinion proved true. Despite the urgent need for ministers and Brownell's proven fitness for the position, his Wesleyan affiliations precluded consideration of his application.

A glimmer of hope for some unexpected funds was raised upon the death of Elizabeth's father at Brookfoot (Yorkshire) in October 1837. Thomas mentioned to his brother William in October 1838, that twelve months had passed without a word from the Freemans regarding family arrangements or disposal of Mr. Freeman's valuable property. In an uncharacteristically monetary tone Brownell admitted that they were anxious for news "knowing that a good slice ought to fall

¹¹² Brownell, "Diary", p.36. Bishop Broughton had visited Tasmania in April - May 1838 and discussed with Archdeacon Hutchins six different stations where clergymen were required with many more requests expected. Broughton had asked "the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (in London) to send to Van Diemen's Land 6 to 8 graduates preferably in deacon's orders. He was concerned that men of quality should be provided who would command the respect of the community and be able to exert a due influence in matters of eternal moment." (Clarke, Hutchins, p.74)

our share and could never come at a more acceptable time."¹¹³ Elizabeth expressed disappointment to her mother in an October 1838 letter about not receiving any family news on arrangements after her father's death. In February 1842 Thomas wrote; "As to the family at Brookfoot, I have dissolved partnership with them several years."¹¹⁴ The final words of disappointment were written in April 1850:

*We have not been able to realise anything yet from the property Mr. Freeman left his family though nearly three years have elapsed since it should have been sold. Failing to get a fair price for it the Executors have not sold it and thus we are kept out of our share. I much fear that when ultimately it comes to hand it will be so dwindled away as to be of little service.*¹¹⁵

Brownell seemed destined to be disappointed in matters of money.

By the end of 1838 a number of facts were apparent. On 1 January 1839, Brownell's Government salaries would be greatly reduced. The 15 percent interest on the mortgage was crippling his finances. No word had come through in regard to the application for the ministry; nor was any inheritance money in evidence. Brownell undertook his aforementioned plan to sell the property and rent it back. Accordingly he put the farm up for auction first on the premises and a second time in Hobart Town. "In neither instance did we effect a sale, hence I incurred a fresh debt to increase my difficulties. Such is the depression of everything at present that purchasers for any kind of property are with difficulty found."¹¹⁶

Brownell wrote an interesting commentary on the Depression to his brother William in late October 1838:

¹¹³ Brownell, "Diary", p.36.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.40.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.44.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.38.

Commercial affairs have been very low the last 2 years and they appear getting worse. It is distressing to have anything to do with business. The measures of the Home Government have strangled the energies of the Colonist and sucked their lifeblood, by draining away the circulating medium to London to pay the passage out of pauper labourers. The granting away of land was abolished in 1832 and the lottery system of selling by Public auction introduced. The consequence has been, respectable and wealthy emigrants having more or less of capital on their arrival here to cultivate grants with, (which) increases the circulating medium, have been prevented from coming; while the money received from those who are stupid enough to buy, is sent to London as above mentioned to send out beggars without a farthing, to be somehow kept. Of course, they increase the demand for food, but the money is gone which should have employed them in cultivating an increased quantum of ground, and the farmer can not launch out in expenses. This raised the price of provisions and has made things very bad. The distress that has existed in Hobart Town the last winter has been appalling when contrasted with former years of prosperity in the Colony when a beggar was as great a curiosity as a bear. Dorcas Societies and Benevolent Societies similar to what I have known in England in times of distress, for relieving poor, unemployed families, have been in active operation. A kind Providence sent (the Colony) a bountiful harvest last season to our relief and brought provisions of every kind to a cheap rate, more than has been known for several years. Otherwise I know not to what extent misery and starvation would have extended.¹¹⁷

By February 1839 the barley crop was doing well and would bring in a return, while the potatoes had failed again due to very little rain. Brownell was "feeling the loss from his reduced Catechist salary of four pounds a month considerably. Nevertheless half a cake is better than none." That loss and possibly the rumours that the Bridgewater Station would close in September (cancelling his appointment as Catechist) must have prompted Brownell to apply in February 1839 to the Government for another position, preferably in the Tasman Peninsular area. That preference meant leaving his farm and indicates recognition by Brownell that his dream was over.

¹¹⁷ Brownell, "Diary", pp. 36-37.

Sadly the dream had become a nightmare. No one could have striven more assiduously to fulfil his dream than Brownell. He could not have laboured more hours at farming nor engaged in any more occupations for income. Certainly more financial wherewithal and more agricultural experience might have turned the dream into a reality. However, circumstances of weather, economy, inexperience, Government and Church policies, and plain bad luck forced the doctor to face the reality that Government Medical Service offered the only safe financial future for a large and increasing family. Brownell wrote:

I could not make all ends meet, paying heavy interest for money borrowed on the property, property fell, the chain gang was broken up, and being unable to meet the heavy interest and expenses I resolved to give it up to the mortgagee, washing my hands of it altogether for the mortgage amount, having incurred a loss of 200 pounds.¹¹⁸

In September 1839, being "a gentleman of good character and professional attainments" Thomas Coke Brownell was appointed Colonial Assistant Surgeon at Avoca.

¹¹⁸ Brownell, "Diary", p. 45. Francis Horner foreclosed in January 1841 and sold the property to Edward Abbott. (Glover, "Biography of T.C. Brownell", p.12.).

CHAPTER 4 - THE REALITY

The Brownells' move to Avoca in September 1839 was significant in a number of ways. It meant re-entering the Colonial Medical Department which Dr. Brownell had vowed he would never do. The move itself was costly for a family with eight children to shift their belongings 100 miles northeast of Hobart. The salary offered was low at three shillings per day plus two shillings and six pence forage allowance, only 100 pounds per annum, although a comfortable residence was provided. Always concerned for his family's welfare, Brownell was anxious about the educational opportunities in a small isolated district for his four older children aged 12, 10, 8 and 6 years. Despite those circumstances and the financial and emotional loss in giving up his farm, Brownell reported the events very factually in his diary without a hint of disappointment, disconsolation or self-recrimination. Whether it was his stoic Wesleyan acceptance of what Brownell perceived as God's Will, or a deep pride which refused to admit defeat is difficult to judge. The only sentence in the diary expressing Brownell's feelings about returning to medical practice says, "Providence opened the way and we went taking it as a stepping stone to something better whenever it might open".¹¹⁹

Fortunately for the family the next fourteen months were happy and settled in Avoca. The principal settlers in the District were friendly and "many maintained a religious profession" which delighted the Brownells. It was a large area for Brownell to cover by horseback. The dearth of bridges necessitated fording numerous streams and rivers often in flood after heavy rain. Nevertheless the doctor expressed pleasure in the successful results of his medical practice. The emoluments were not sufficient however to meet the needs of the growing family; nor were the educational opportunities acceptable, as Brownell had feared. A

¹¹⁹ Brownell, "Diary", p.41.

promotion to Port Arthur was therefore "gladly accepted" in December 1840 though the Brownells "parted with much regret from a nice people" at Avoca.

The primitive settlement at Port Arthur from which Brownell had resigned in 1833 had now grown to a population of nearly 2,300 with 1,100 prisoners, some 700 convict boys across the bay at Point Puer, plus about 500 civil and military staff with their families. All of those would be under Dr. Brownell's medical charge. "It was a first class appointment in the Department with good pay and allowances offered in a very complimentary manner".¹²⁰ His salary rose to ten shillings per day plus forage allowance, quarters, rations for self, family and servant. Brownell soon discovered that he earned every penny of that increase through the responsibility entrusted to him. Little wonder that four other medical officers had turned the appointment down. Not only was the workload excessive but also as Deputy Inspector of Hospitals John Clarke wrote to the Colonial Secretary "any competent unmarried officer would be putting himself in a manner in Quarantine, cut off from all society or intercourse of friends on the Penal Peninsula". Clarke further stated that a few additional rations and the extra accommodation needed for Brownell's family of nine children were not extravagant when "the Gentleman renders useful service in a very responsible and very unpleasant situation."¹²¹

That responsibility was in Brownell's words, "full employment both for mind and body having no qualified medical assistant, except the services of a Dispenser at the Hospital." At Port Arthur Brownell was responsible for the health of both the free and the convict population, plus hospital reception of serious cases of illness and accidents. The Point Puer boys were also under Brownell's direct charge. As well the various probation outstations on the Tasman Peninsula such as the Coal Mines, Impression Bay and Cascades were under his supervision. There were assistant

¹²⁰ Brownell, "Diary", p.49.

¹²¹ CSO 5/263/6808

medical attendants stationed at each outpost to provide daily care at their Dispensaries but their medical supplies, accounts and final decisions were the responsibility of Brownell.

In late 1841 it was decided to open two more probation stations if sufficient water could be found at Slop Island and Flinders Bay. Principal Medical Officer John Clarke inspected the stations and reported that a twenty-five bed general hospital and a qualified medical officer were "absolutely necessary" at Saltwater River. Furthermore Clarke agreed with Brownell that the Port Arthur hospital "will be totally inadequate to accommodate the number of patients, which may be expected from the increasing number of convicts located there."¹²² He urged the immediate construction of a one hundred bed hospital, "independent of any arrangement affecting the outstations." After some debate, Clarke won the day and both hospitals were erected in 1842.

Clarke's letter of 23 November 1841 to the Colonial Secretary stated, "I have found the prisoners remarkably healthy. I believe it would be difficult to find in any other colony so small a proportion of sick."¹²³ That would confirm Dr. Brownell's statement that, "the number of cases which passed under my notice and treatment in the year 1842 was upwards of 13,000, of these a portion were treated in Hospital, our number of deaths ten. A mortality which I think I might challenge the world to produce the like."¹²⁴ It should be understood that there were no anaesthetics, antiseptics, X-rays or blood transfusions at that time. "Operations were confined to what was technically feasible with heavy metal saws, forceps and scissors, and a conscious patient."¹²⁵ Common drugs were available but the doctors had no scientific understanding of the properties of the drugs they prescribed. Most

¹²² CSO 22/52/305

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Brownell, "Diary", p.42.

¹²⁵ Rimmer, W.G., Portrait of a Hospital, p.35.

patients recovered more from their native immunity than from the treatment they received. It is important to remember however, that "Between 80 to 85 percent of colonists were in the fifteen to forty-five age group, at the healthiest stage of their lives, and led an active existence in a natural environment 'without injury to the constitution'."¹²⁶ That fact was an important reason for fewer deaths with so few degenerative or infectious diseases as found in normal aging and infant populations. Another factor was the Colonial Surgeons' belief in the miasmatic theory of disease which held that dirt produced disease. Cleanliness as a preventative measure could have accounted for a good deal of Dr. Brownell's success rate at the Port Arthur Hospital. It was earlier suggested that Brownell's insistence on hygiene resulted in the *Tranby's* disease-free trip to Australia. In fact the standard of practice in the Colonial Medical Service was high. Colonial Surgeons undertook research into the interaction between the environment and health. "Several government surgeons made contributions in the field of public health."¹²⁷ Brownell wrote that "the practical knowledge to be attained from such a large and varied practice is considerable."¹²⁸ The numerous inquests he attended and post mortems he performed must have added to that knowledge.

There was, however, a disturbing element to medical practice at a penal settlement as Brownell wrote:

The nature of the discipline in operation here from the description of men to be dealt with makes the duties of the medical officer very onerous and partake of a complexion very different from those of one in general private practice. Our population is a concentration of wickedness and vice, and the discipline exercised severe. In or out of the Bottomless Pit, greater depravity could not have been collected together. We have a missionary resident here (Rev. John Manton) which adds much to our comfort. There

¹²⁶ Rimmer, W.G., Portrait of a Hospital, p.37.

¹²⁷ Ibid., p.38. "Edward Bedford, Edward Hall, James Agnew and Robert Officer advocated compulsory vaccination, quarantine facilities, improvements in water supplies and sewage disposal, and better care and diets at the colonial orphanage."

¹²⁸ Brownell, "Diary", p.42.

is a large substantial stone church, capable of containing fourteen hundred people. Public service is performed twice every Sabbath, but always the seed sower falls into stony ground. The moral condition of these men is well likened to the valley of dry bones. There is no life in them and it seems to require the miraculous power of God to bring any one into life. I have not known of one instance of real conversion among them during the two years I have been here. Even those who have died in Hospital with every opportunity of instruction and reflection, the mention of spiritual things has been quite a grief and annoyance to them. They have gone out of the world stupid and unconcerned, judicially hardened, vessels of wrath fitted for destruction. ¹²⁹

For a sensitive and religious man like Brownell such an atmosphere would have been a Slough of Despond.

There was also a dangerous element to Brownell's work with convicts. One William Langham, "a bad violent character", plunged a knife two inches deep into the neck of young Thomas Cook, attempting to cut Cook's throat. A struggle ensued, assistance arrived and the boy was saved. Two days later, on 16 May 1842:

In company with the Dispenser and Turnkey, (Brownell) attended at the cells to inquire if any under confinement required medical aid. Langham said he 'wished me to examine his eyes, they were inflamed'. He came out of his cell into the passage; I went up to him, examined his eyes (there was nothing the matter with them). I was turning away to leave, when, with a knife concealed up his sleeve, he made a plunge at my neck. There was something suspicious in his bearing altogether which excited our notice and hence all of us were on guard. Before turning I had taken a step backward keeping my eye sternly upon him. The Turnkey also struck Langham on the arm as he was lurching forward, thereby modifying the force and direction of his blow. In consequence the point of the knife glanced along, skin deep only, about the centre of the lower jaw, making an incision little more than an inch in length. Langham was immediately secured with handcuffs and kept in that state until removed to Hobart Town and committed to trial. ¹³⁰

¹²⁹ Brownell, "Diary", pp. 41-43.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.42.

William Langham was prosecuted for both cases, found guilty of both and executed by hanging on 12 September 1842.¹³¹ Despite the fear such an experience must have evoked, Brownell spoke of his "painful duty" in giving medical evidence in four cases of wilful or attempted murder, including his own case. His dislike of man's violent nature did not preclude hope for forgiveness and redemption.

After three years spent in such moral morass, Brownell decided the economic advantages were not worth:

the moral influence exerted upon us of a pernicious character. By habitually witnessing either crime or its punishment, the mind becomes inured and the fine feelings blunted, so that what at first appears shocking and revolting is apt to soften down to a lighter grade and sin is not seen and felt to be so exceedingly sinful as it should be, to deter from its commission. I cannot but feel my responsibility as a parent under such circumstances, and wish for some location which would be exempted from such a state of things ... I do not intend to remain there any longer than I can see my way clear to move.¹³²

In February 1843, Dr. Brownell applied to replace Dr. Walch who was resigning from George Town.¹³³ The appointment was approved but at a decrease in salary to seven shillings/six pence a day (from ten shillings) plus twenty-six pounds per year lodgings money. A Government vessel passage from Port Arthur to George Town was also afforded for the Brownell family.¹³⁴ His acceptance of a lower salary indicates how strongly Brownell felt about the evil influence of Port Arthur on his family. In late 1842 from Port Arthur Thomas wrote to his brother James, "Our temporal condition is perhaps as good now as ever it was since we came to the Colony, but our expenses are greater in consequence of our increase in family and the age to which some of our first born are advancing, requiring education,

¹³¹ "On the scaffold Langham blamed the misery of Port Arthur which had driven him to desperation. In the condemned cell Langham ate so heartily and played so happily with a toy noose as to leave his sanity in considerable doubt." Davis R., The Tasmanian Gallows, (Hobart 1974), p.53.

¹³² Brownell, "Diary", p.42.

¹³³ CSO 22/67/1474.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

etc., which comes in expensive in these quarters."¹³⁵ At that time (1842) Brownell expressed optimism about his financial status, claiming he had recovered from his former losses which had required "great sacrifices and perseverance". In 1843 he expected "to conquer every difficulty and once more begin to save." Instead the 1843 move to George Town on the lower pay would once again mean, "we can save nothing and the prospect ahead is far from cheering," but Brownell's priority was the welfare and health of his family. "As a family we have much to be thankful for, the general good health we have been favoured to enjoy, with just enough of this world's goods to be comfortable and no more."¹³⁶ His financial sacrifice proved rather futile however as the George Town Probation Station was closed in nine months. The family was moved in January 1844 to Maria Island which had re-opened as a Probation Station in 1842.

The diary contains only a few sentences in reference to the Brownells' four and a half years at Maria Island. It had become a station "of much more consequence" since their 1830's appointment there; nevertheless Dr. Brownell was paid the same lesser salary of seven shillings/six pence as at George Town. That may well account for Brownell's application in September and again in November 1844 for the position of Surgeon Superintendent at Flinders Island with an increased salary plus a higher rank. He gave as a major reason for applying, "having a large family, I feel anxious to obtain such an appointment as it will give me the means of securing for them a suitable education,"¹³⁷ presumably in costly private schools in Hobart or Launceston. Both requests were turned down due to the Government's determination to keep Dr. Joseph Milligan on at Flinders Island. (See Footnote 36, p.13).

¹³⁵ Brownell, "Diary", p.42.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, p.43.

¹³⁷ CSO 8/137/2731.

Two years later when a second station was opened at Long Point six miles south of Darlington (Maria Island), Brownell was put in medical charge of it as well, and paid an additional two shillings/six pence Contingent Allowance from 1 October 1846 which raised his total pay back up to ten shillings per day. Brownell now received his top income while his family lived in a more benign environment. La Trobe wrote in his 1846 Report that Darlington was the "best arranged Station in Tasmania, ... deserving of commendation and reflected great credit upon the Officers who had effected the interior management and economy." The Station demonstrated that care and attention by Officers could "effect a change for the better in the character of the men."¹³⁸ That sounded closer to Brownell's humanitarian approach to overcome man's baser nature and lead him by education and example to The Light. Though he did not write about that period, the fact that the family lived in a new well-built house; the Hospital was "an excellent brick building" (according to La Trobe); and the general ambience of Maria Island was orderly and conducive to reform, must have provided a pleasant interlude for the Brownell family. The only other diary reference is proudly made regarding Brownell's appointment" into the Commission of the Peace as a Magistrate of the Territory of Van Diemen's Land. The Commandant of the Island was also a Magistrate, and to our adjudication either separately or conjointly, all offences fell."¹³⁹ An appointment such as that meant a great deal to Brownell, not only for the additional five shillings per day, but more significantly for the social status and local authority which it bestowed. Brownell's pride was indicated by the inferred importance of the position when writing home about such an honour.

Letters to and from family and friends during the appointments at George Town and Maria Island apparently stopped altogether. In February 1842 Brownell had written to this brother-in-law Henry Collier:

¹³⁸ Brand, I, The Convict Probation System: Van Diemen's Land 1839-1854, (Hobart, 1990), p.179.

¹³⁹ Brownell, "Diary", p.49.

I hope you will be a little quicker in your scribbling motions another time and not wait a whole year either for 'widespread deepening gloom' or anything else. As you are my only correspondent in England, the connecting link as it were even of all old associations and friendships, your epistles possess a kind of interest appertaining to a curiosity, and afford much pleasure on reception. Do not startle at the idea of your being the only one who writes to me, unnatural as such a state of things is, it is nevertheless a fact. Whenever you see (my sisters or brother James) you may just say how highly I appreciate their affectionate remembrance !!! It is exactly three years this month since I wrote to James and have heard nothing in return. It is longer since I heard direct from the girls. It would give me much pleasure to receive a letter from any of them. Mrs. Brownell writes to her Mother about every four years, so what has become of them all we are entirely ignorant.¹⁴⁰

Communication between emigrants and their family and friends at home was very important, a constant topic of conversation, and a great frustration to all correspondents as expressed by the Tanners, the Hentys, the Brownells and many others. Brownell kept a letter book, "very tedious and a heavy tax upon my time and labour at many times. But it is useful in case any letters miscarry" which so many frequently did, due to shipwrecks, lost mail bags and most often when sent by hand through travellers or ship's staff. The first five years in Van Diemen's Land Brownell wrote and received letters regularly though some could take six months to a year to reach their destination. Most letters began with ten to twenty lines discussing how long they had been in transit, how best to send mail, what the cost of postage was. Brownell's letters were very caring of his brothers and sisters as well as of his wife's Freeman relatives. Personal problems were never mentioned. Interpersonal relations with his working staff or superiors were never discussed. Inner feelings were seldom disclosed and yet the true man was gradually revealed. Brownell's abiding devotion to Wesleyan beliefs was always a strong element in every letter. Interestingly he wrote most candidly to Rev. Nathaniel Turner when he gossiped about the Methodists' politics, births, deaths,

¹⁴⁰ Brownell, "Diary", p.40.

marriages, and even the ladies' outfits worn to Lady Franklin's reception. There was some wit, some sarcasm, a strong sense of honour, occasional pride, and a deep affection for his children, his siblings, and his friends expressed in all his writings. It can therefore be appreciated that a lapse of seven years from 1843-1850 without a letter from home was distressing for such a caring gentleman.

When a letter finally arrived in April 1850, Thomas wrote to his sister Elizabeth:

*I had almost despaired of receiving correspondence again with my own dear relatives. However I ventured in Feb. 1849 to launch another epistle and it appears some friendly wind wafted it in safety to its desired haven ... I hope, now that the ice so long frozen is effectually thawed, we shall not allow it again to close upon us, but keep the steam up and the passage clear by regular interchanges of affectionate remembrances, vulgarly called letters.*¹⁴¹

Thomas would do his best to keep the lines of communication open as numerous letters were written and received over the next three years.

When Elizabeth's letter arrived in 1850, Brownell had been moved to the General Hospital in Hobart Town as one of three Resident Medical Officers. Who instigated the move is unclear though the more likely party is Brownell not the Medical Department. From 1847 the numerous Probation Stations around the Island were being closed down and a surplus of doctors was accumulating. Local towns and districts could only absorb so many. Brownell believed, "Those connected with the General Hospital may be the last to go to the right-about."¹⁴² When Long Point Station closed in 1848 it must be presumed that Brownell's two shilling/six pence Contingent Allowance was cut out. Were rumours circulating that Maria Island (Darlington) Station would also be abandoned in the near future? (In fact it was closed in 1850.) Brownell had shown initiative in the past in

¹⁴¹ Brownell, "Diary", p.43.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p.44.

acquiring the right position at the propitious time. No record of his application for the Hobart General Hospital could be located, but Dr. Brownell is listed as appointed House Surgeon on 24 July 1848 at a salary of ten shillings per day, Contingent Allowance of two shillings/six pence per day, Quarters, Fuel and Light and a Personal Ration. This was a considerable rise in both rank and salary but the responsibility and workload were commensurate.

We have one building for men containing 150 beds, and another building for women accommodating 75 patients. To these I stand as House Surgeon, my duties though extensive being of a general character, including all casualties brought in between the visiting hours. In addition, I have exclusive charge of the Infirmary for Females, worn out by age and sickness, where we make up 50 beds. Besides these, I am the sole Medical Officer to the Male Penitentiary in Town averaging generally 1000 men strong every day. All serious cases are drafted to the General Hospital, others are treated as outpatients. Some thousands of cases annually pass through my hands. I am fully and honourably employed and if not overburdened with this world's goods, have not lost my status in society after 20 years residence.¹⁴³

Brownell's pride was well-deserved in having the stamina to maintain such duties at age 50 years, and to have persevered over 20 years to give his family financial security.

Circumstances at the Hospital would conspire to weaken Thomas Brownell's system after 49 years of exceptional health. The roof in his quarters at the Hospital leaked badly. Despite numerous requests for repairs, nothing was done. During the winter of 1849, "heavy rain came through the ceiling of our bedroom in streams on the floor. We placed buckets to catch it. The ceiling was sail cloth, not plaster, consequently it held moisture like a sponge, and continued damp for many days after the rain had ceased."¹⁴⁴ The first signs of rheumatism began and steadily worsened until mid-September when Brownell also succumbed to the

¹⁴³ Brownell, "Diary", pp.45 & 49.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p.46.

prevalent influenza epidemic. He took two weeks leave of absence and stayed with old friends in Avoca to recuperate. Obviously not fully recovered the doctor resumed duty and shortly developed a cold which led to fever, rheumatism in the throat muscles, ulcers, inflammation of the upper trachea and quinsy (abscess) in the left tonsil. He was "removed from Town in a state of great weakness and emaciation to a friend's in the country." When he was stronger Brownell journeyed on to Campbell Town for Rev. John Manton's home where he spent a month rebuilding his health.

During Dr. Brownell's absence, Dr. Richardson, the Senior Medical Officer at the Hospital, took over most of Brownell's duties. It was obviously a severe strain and six weeks after Brownell's resumption of duties, Richardson took ill. Brownell then had all Wards in both Hospitals under his care. Richardson finally was obliged to retire and staff was then hired to relieve Brownell of the extra duties. Sadly, Brownell wrote, "My constitutional powers I don't think have been yet fully restored. I am not the man I was three years ago. Having passed my meridian of life, I cannot expect that they should rally so quickly as if I were in the heigh day of youth."¹⁴⁵ Brownell believed his sedentary lifestyle added to his poor health. He missed his "horse exercise and country air and rides." Health problems would now plague the doctor until his retirement in 1858. In the meantime the resilient and spiritual Brownell wrote: "I mean to adopt every precaution to prevent sickness, and must calmly leave the issue with a kind Providence trusting and believing that He will do that which is best for me. I feel I am not a young man, now advancing in my 50th year, and I cannot and must not do with impunity what I could do at 30."¹⁴⁶ With that attitude it hardly seems reasonable that Brownell would have applied for additional duties. Nevertheless as of 17 October 1851, he was appointed Surgeon to the Female Immigration Depot at the Old Wharf for

¹⁴⁵ Brownell, "Diary", p.47.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p.44.

which Brownell received an extra two shillings/six pence a day.¹⁴⁷ Increased income was always an incentive for the struggling Brownells but the tone of the official records implies that Dr. Brownell was assigned the position because "the Immigration Depot needs regular visits by a Medical Man."¹⁴⁸

A visit to the Hospital by the Quaker missionaries, Frederick Mackie and Robert Lindsey occasioned a renewal of friendship between Elizabeth Brownell and Lindsey. Mackie wrote in his diary, "30 Dec. 1852. Took tea with Dr. Brownell, his wife and family at the Hospital. His wife was from Brighthouse and well known to R.L."¹⁴⁹ The diary entry then went into detail about a patient of Dr. Brownell's who had attempted suicide by slitting his throat. Mackie describes the wound and the "ghastly attempts" to feed the man. The men's wards of 140 inmates were "lofty, spacious and exceedingly well ventilated." Catholics and Protestants were in separate wards. The female wards held about 40 inmates and were "far inferior to the men's." Men nurses were employed for men patients. Diseases of the eye were common so there were two wards set aside for ophthalmic problems. Mackie wrote with fascination about a bushranger who had been shot in the thigh, then "Dr. Brownell showed us the infirmary which is set apart for aged or incapacitated female paupers: they have comfortable apartments and a good yard for exercise. There are about 50 paupers but more can be accommodated."¹⁵⁰

It was during his years at the Hospital that Brownell again took up letter writing with enthusiasm. Perhaps it was the long and serious illness which brought omens of aging and death, or the joy of receiving sister Elizabeth's letter as quoted above, in any event Brownell was spurred on to renew contact with friends and family. The opinions expressed in those letters are interesting as Brownell discussed topics

¹⁴⁷ CSO 24/179/6263

¹⁴⁸ CSO 1/70/1730

¹⁴⁹ Mackie, F., Traveller Under Concern, p.61.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p.69.

as diverse as: Transportation, the advancement of Methodism, descriptions of Van Diemen's Land climate and geography, Radical Movements in England, prosperity in V.D.L. in 1851, discovery of gold in N.S.W., Victoria, and imminently (he believed) in V.D.L. Brownell's comments usually revealed attitudes commonly expected by modern historians, but occasionally he adopted a puzzling posture. An example of such inconsistency is found in a letter to old friend and fellow *Tranby* emigrant, Joseph Hardey, in August 1850 when Brownell discussed Transportation:

I see it is determined to make your Colony (Swan River) a receptacle for prisoners similar to Van Diemen's Land. Our Colonists have been blessing themselves with the idea of Free Institutions and no more convicts, and (after the assertions of the Ministry at Home) they have every reason to do so, more especially with the fact before them that none have been sent for the last four years under the Probation System. Hence the various Probation Stations throughout the Colony have been broken up until not one remains. It seems from Lord Grey's expose of the Home Government's intentions in reference to Transportation that they are doomed to disappointment on the Convict Question. Whatever may be ceded as to Free Institutions, convicts in limited numbers will continue to be sent here, only, however, with the indulgencies, after having undergone a period of discipline at Home. Swan River too, I see, is to have its quantum but I fear those who requested convicts for your Colony will be disappointed in the amount of pecuniary expenditure which they expected to have in connection with them. The men will be landed as Ticket-of-Leave holders, eligible for immediate hire, without being maintained in gangs during a period of discipline, at the expense of the British Treasury, as they have been here in past years, occasioning an outlay of upwards of 200,000 pounds per annum in some years. The continuance of Transportation here in any form occasions much annoyance to the majority of the Free inhabitants, and they are still determined on Petitioning against it. I cannot myself see eye to eye with those who would wholly abolish it nor agree with them in the extent to which they go into describing the demoralisation consequent upon it; but on these subjects I cannot now enlarge.¹⁵¹

It is difficult to fathom Brownell's attitude regarding Transportation. Repeatedly he wrote of the convicts' depravity, the lack of a single convict conversion to

¹⁵¹ Brownell, "Diary", p.45.

Christian thinking, their immoral influence on penal settlement civil and military staff, particularly on their children. Yet he disagreed with the Anti-Transportationists' concern about the convicts' demoralisation of the Free community. That hardly seems plausible. Did important citizens and friends such as George Hull who supported Denison influence Brownell? Why would Hull's beliefs in the betterment of convicts through Transportation hold more sway than John West's argument that convictism brought ignorance, disorder and crime, and intensified class struggle?¹⁵² Perhaps the most likely (though least attractive) reason for Brownell's support of Transportation was that his job depended on it. Without convicts there was no need for Colonial Surgeons in the Convict Medical Department. A hint of such reasoning is given at the end of Brownell's letter to Hardey:

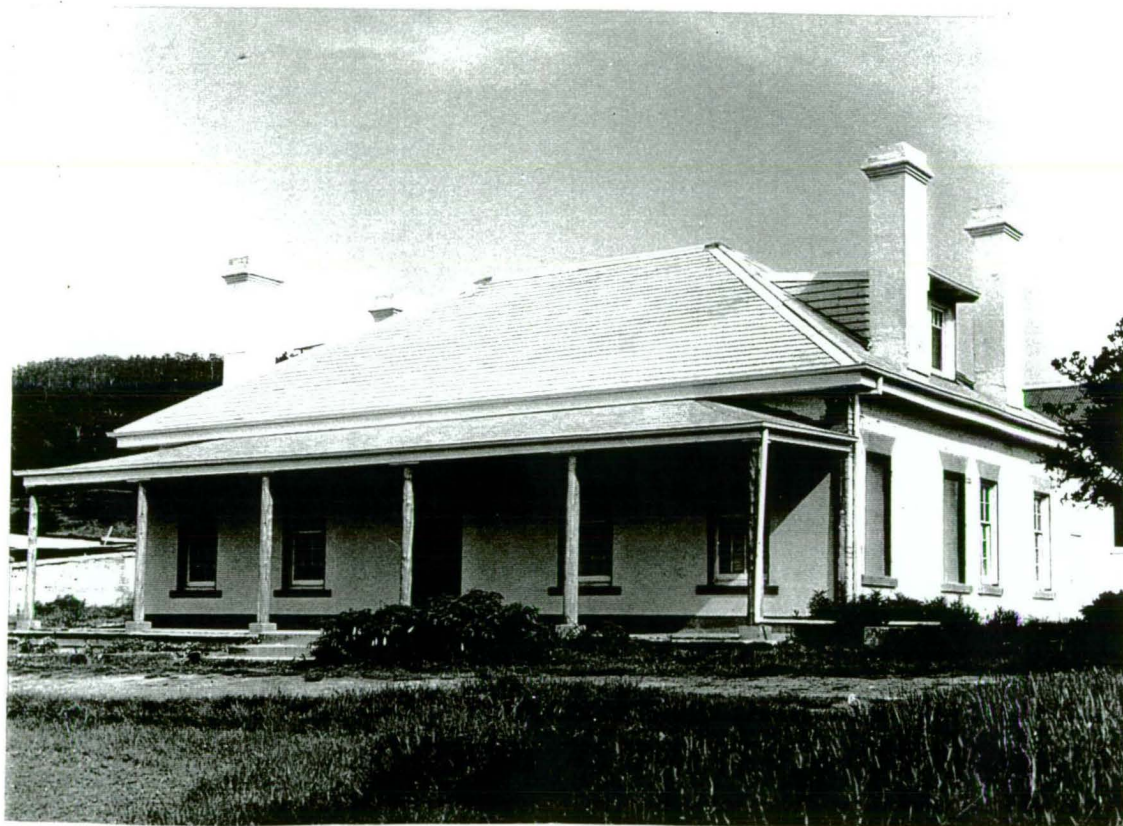
It might be yet our lot to see you again at the Swan, if Transportation be fully set up there. The Home Government might suggest or even order our being employed at the Swan instead of giving us pensions here. When Transportation ceased at Sydney, many medical men were brought down to V.D.L. Swan River, however is so much more distant and the cost of conveyance would be so great I hardly think it would be contemplated, unless with the view of inducing us to refuse, that a pretext might be afforded to cut off our Pensions.¹⁵³

That cynicism was very uncharacteristic of Brownell. The next sentence saw the usual optimism resurface: "What prospects have medical men now in your Colony? Are you well stocked with men of my talent? On what terms could I procure land from the Government now?" In fact Brownell's enquiry about not only a job, but also another farm, borders on fantasy and probably was just that or perhaps witticism with an old friend.

The reality was that in December 1853 due to:

¹⁵² Robson, L., A History of Tasmania, Vol. I, pp. 497 and 499.

¹⁵³ Brownell, "Diary", p.46.



Medical Officer's House (1848), Port Arthur, occupied by Dr. Thomas Coke Brownell, his wife and children from 1853-1857. Restoration in 1982-83 returned the dwelling to its appearance when occupied by Thomas Brownell about 1855, with furnishings appropriate to the period.

(Photograph #66-1958, Port Arthur Historic Site).

*changes in the Department on Tasman Peninsula having been determined on, in consequence of disagreements between Medical Officers and the Superintendent of some of the stations, I have been solicited again to take medical charge at Port Arthur a Penal Station, with a Commandant appointed as formerly. The number of (convict) men is between 700-800. Civil and military officers with their families augment the population to 1003. The Norfolk Island Establishment (is) to be abandoned.*¹⁵⁴

Brownell was assisted by a clerk and Dispenser at Port Arthur. In September 1857 with the closure of the Impression Bay Station, he was joined at Port Arthur by William Secombe who (having argued with the Department and won the decision that he was Senior Medical Officer)¹⁵⁵ was placed above Brownell in rank and salary which must have been a blow to his pride and pocket. Nothing more is noted in the diary nor could be uncovered in Archives except that Brownell acted as Magistrate from 10 April 1855 at a salary of five shillings per diem, again a financial and status bonus that would have meant a great deal to him personally.

The Quakers Mackie and Lindsey called into Port Arthur and noted Brownell's "improved health". The next day, Christmas 1853 they "took tea and spent evening with Dr. Brownell and his family. Before separating Robert Lindsey had religious council and encouragement to communicate."¹⁵⁶ That rehabilitation was not to last as Brownell's health deteriorated at Port Arthur. In May 1858 the Medical Board granted him eleven weeks leave of absence on account of severe rheumatism, dyspepsia and his generally impaired health. The leave was considered necessary to save his life.¹⁵⁷ During that period Brownell had to provide a locum, paying him twelve pounds per month plus a ration.¹⁵⁸ Brownell applied for a pension of 115 pounds/6 shillings/3 pence on 15 September 1858 assessed on his current total salary of 275 pounds/15 shillings. In spite of all

¹⁵⁴ Brownell, "Diary", p.51.

¹⁵⁵ CSO 5/263/6808

¹⁵⁶ Mackie, F., Traveller Under Concern, p.162.

¹⁵⁷ CO 280/341/Reel 746.

¹⁵⁸ Glover, M., "Lifestyles - A Biography of T.C. Brownell", p.22.

appeals, the final pension granted was only 84 pounds /12 shillings/4 pence per annum.¹⁵⁹ The diary's last entry is 28th March 1858, "Mrs. Brownell left Port Arthur to proceed to England in the *Aurora Australis*. Sailed this morning." No records can be located as to Elizabeth Brownell's return to Hobart. The only other record is that of her death on 8 January 1879 in Hobart.¹⁶⁰

After his wife's departure for England, Brownell left Port Arthur in October 1858. A silver cup now on display at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery was presented to him with the inscription: "Presented by the Officers of Port Arthur to Thomas Coke Brownell Esq., JP, Asst. Colonial Surgeon, on his retirement from the Public Service, as a mark of their esteem. Oct. 1858." In addition the residents of Port Arthur presented Brownell with a grandfather clock. Thomas and Elizabeth Brownell retired to "Nile Terrace", Elizabeth St., Hobart where Thomas died from chronic bronchitis on 10 November 1871. He was buried at the Wesleyan Cemetery, Hill Street, but later was re-interred in the family vault at Cornelian Bay. His estate listed assets valued at 141 pounds, corroboration of his claim that his earthly possessions were few.¹⁶¹

Of course a man's true worth cannot be calculated in pounds, shillings and pence. Brownell's true worth lay in the hundreds of thousands of bodies and minds he ministered to with care and devotion. His real assets were the eleven children he worked so long and hard to nurture and educate with fine ideals. The Brownell family has continued to contribute to the social fabric of Tasmania. That is the real legacy of Thomas Coke Brownell - a humanitarian colonial.

¹⁵⁹ CO 280/341/Reel 746.

¹⁶⁰ RGD 35/9#1598.

¹⁶¹ Glover, M., "Lifestyles - A Biography of T. C. Brownell, p.22.

CONCLUSION

Fortunately for modern historians, the Victorians believed in the value of keeping diaries and letter-books from which details of daily life, practical problems and prevalent views can be uncovered. Thomas Brownell wrote that it was, "a lasting remembrancer and history of passing events, views, feelings, etc." which in his case certainly proved true. From his diaries and letters the story emerges of how difficult life in the Colonies was for a family of modest means. Having been lured by British Government promises of land grants, rumours of a land of plenty, and dreams of a new society based on Wesleyan ideals, Thomas Brownell's writings tell of broken promises, an untamed land requiring hard work with few comforts or even necessities, and a morally depraved atmosphere which threatened his family's sensibilities, but offered the only assured financial security to maintain his large family.

Brownell's 30 year struggle to support his large family required him to accept appointments to various occupations around Van Diemen's Land. As a colonial surgeon in the Convict Medical Service details come to light regarding the limited and primitive medical practices from 1830-1860, and how arduous, unpleasant and sometimes dangerous the work was. As well Brownell was both a catechist and a teacher to the convicts with few up-lifting results. That did not dampen his zeal or support for the religious and moral development of Van Diemen's Land. He wrote about Church politics and Wesleyan members' gossip, but most frequently about the progress of the Methodist Cause around the Island.

The hardest disappointment for Brownell was his failure at farming. He believed it was the safest financial venture for a man of modest means. In fact the reverse was true. Successful farming required sufficient capital not only to become established but also to ride out droughts, depression and misadventures. Many

hopeful middle income settlers found that without large assets and agricultural experience their dreams of landed independence were far removed from reality. Despite determined efforts to succeed, like Thomas Brownell, they eventually lost everything, their land, their savings, and their independence. Unable or unwilling to return Home, they looked for other possibilities which the Colony could offer their talents. Government Service was the most obvious answer. It was there that Brownell found secure employment, albeit in an environment which offended his finer inclinations and principles. Through it all, Brownell displayed resilience, optimism, and a willingness to accept challenges, work hard, and even learn new skills. He continued to strive with pride in his achievements whether he was farming, teaching, curing the body, the mind, or the spirit.

Thomas Coke Brownell's diary affords glimpses of life as it was lived by free settlers like himself whose spirits, attitudes and endeavours were essential in developing the character and assuring the progress of Van Diemen's Land. The most significant value, however, in studying a Victorian diary such as Brownell's is the discovery of some little known facts or clues which lead to investigation and research into Official Records and Letters. Those small pieces of information can fill out and colour in the socio-historic fabric of Tasmanian history.

APPENDIX I

BIOGRAPHICAL OUTLINE OF THOMAS COKE BROWNELL M.R.C.S., L.S.A.

1800	(17 Dec.)	Born to Rev. John & Jane Cooper Brownell at St. Kitts, West Indies - 2nd child, 1st son. (older sister, Mary born 11 May, 1799).
1802	(29 Oct.)	Brother, John Baxter, born St. Kitts.
1804	(27 Sept.)	Brother, James, born Tortola, West Indies.
1806		Family moved back to England.
	(16 Sept.)	Brother, William, born, Lynn, Norfolk.
1810	(12 June)	Sister, Jane Anne, born Great Yarmouth.
1812	(29 Jan.)	Sister, Elizabeth, born Bedford.
1814	(14 June)	Mother died, Bolton-le-Moor, Lancashire.
1818	(8 Jan.)	Father married Anne Unwin of Sheffield.
School Years:		Educated at Kingswood and Woodhouse Grove Schools. Apprenticeship to Doctor in Yorkshire. St. Thomas's and Guy's Hospital. Obtained diploma (1822). Practiced privately in Halifax, Yorkshire for about 4 years.
1821	(24 Sept.)	Father died, Newark-upon-Trent. 51 years.
1823		Married Elizabeth Freeman (born 15 Jan. 1805), daughter of William Freeman and Elizabeth Rhodes Freeman of Brookfoot, Yorkshire.
1825		Elizabeth Cooper, 1st child, born in England, died in infancy.
1826	(7 July)	Jane Cooper, 2nd child, born in England - died 8 months later.
1827	(28 Dec.)	Daughter, Jane Anne born at Brookfoot, Yorkshire.
1829	(Sept. 9)	Departed from Hull for Swan River, W.A. on "Tranby".
	(Dec. 5)	Son, James Story, born at sea near Cape of Good Hope.
1830	(Feb. 2)	"Tranby" arrived at Swan River, W.A. with 4 Brownells.
	(Apr. 15)	Departed Swan River on "Warrior" for Hobart Town.
	(May 15)	Arrived Hobart on "Warrior".
	(July 20)	Arrived Maria Island, appt. Assist. Colonial Surgeon and Lecturer and Catechist.
1831	(Oct. 2)	Daughter, Mary Elizabeth, born at Maria Island.
1832	(Sept.)	Maria Island Convict Settlement closed. Moved to Port Arthur, appt. Assist. Colonial Surgeon and Lecturer and Catechist.
1833	(Apr. 25)	Resigned from Port Arthur.
	(June)	Private Medical Practice in Hobart Town.
	(June 18)	Son, William Freeman, born in Hobart.
	(Mar. 4)	Sister, Mary, died Sheffield.
1834	(July)	Granted 10 acres at Brighton to farm. Appt. as Catechist to chain gang building Derwent Causeway.
1835	(Jan. 23)	Son, Thomas Turner, born at Brighton.
1836	(Mar. 17)	Daughter, Eliza, born at Brighton.

	(July)	Moved to Black Snake, Bridgewater (Grantton). Bought 40 acres to farm. Continued as Catechist to Derwent Causeway chain gang.
1837	(Mar.)	Dr. & Mrs. Brownell approved as Schoolmaster and Schoolmistress at Bridgewater.
	(Sept. 13)	Daughter, Hannah, born at Black Snake.
1838	(Nov. 25)	Daughter, Emily Manton born at Black Snake.
	(Oct.)	Applied to Archdeacon Hutchins to become ordained minister.
1839	(Jan.)	Catechist salary cut from 100 pounds to 50 pounds, also reductions in Schoolmaster's salary and allowances.
	(Sept.)	Derwent Causeway finished. Chain gang moved elsewhere.
	(Sept.)	Appt. Dist. Surgeon at Avoca.
1840	(Nov. 29)	Daughter, Sarah, born at Hobart.
	(Dec.)	Promoted to Medical Charge of Port Arthur.
1842	(May 16)	Convict William Langham slashed Dr. Brownell's throat with knife.
	(Sept. 12)	Langham hanged for attempted murder.
1843	(Feb. 21)	Son, John Beecham, born at Hobart.
	(May)	Moved to George Town, appt. Assist. Colonial Surgeon.
1844	(Jan.)	George Town Probation Station closed. Moved to re-opened Maria Island Probation Station, appt. Assist. Colonial Surgeon.
	(Sept. 25)	Last son, Edward Arthur, born at Maria Island.
1848	(Aug.)	Appt. House Surgeon at H.M. General Hospital - Hobart.
1850	(Mar.)	Son, James Story (20 yrs.), in navy on voyage to California. Daughter, Jane Anne, married to Mr. Handley.
1851		Appt. Surgeon, Female Immigration Depot, Hobart, as well as General Hospital House Surgeon.
1853	(Dec.)	Appt. Asst. Colonial Surgeon and Assist. Magistrate, Port Arthur.
1854	(Nov.)	Son, William Freeman, married Frances Maria Preston at Hobart.
1855	(Oct. 11)	Daughter, Eliza, married John Church at New Town.
1857	(Mar.)	Son, James, married Jane Spark Preston Reeve.
		Step-mother, Anne Unwin Brownell, died at Henley-on-Matlock, Derbyshire.
	(Nov. 1)	Daughter, Jane Anne, died at Battery Point of consumption.
1858	(Mar. 28)	Mrs. Elizabeth Brownell sailed for England on "Aurora Australis".
	(Oct.)	T.C. Brownell retired from Public Service on pension due to poor health.
1862	(Nov.)	Son, William Freeman, proprietor of London Drapery at 90 Liverpool Street, Hobart.
1867	(Apr.)	Son, Edward Arthur, applied to become teacher.
1869		Son, Edward Arthur, married Harriet Newell Taylor.
1871	(Nov. 10)	T.C. Brownell died of chronic bronchitis at New Town.
1876		Son, John Beecham, married 2nd wife Clara Morey at New Norfolk.
1879	(Jan. 8)	Wife, Elizabeth Brownell, died of apoplexy at Hobart.

APPENDIX II

In both his feuds with Thomas Brownell and with Port Arthur Hospital, Dr. James Scott emerged as arrogant, unreasonable and petulant. The fact that Lieut.-Governor Arthur did not support Scott's policies and actions in these two cases further added to that picture. However, historical profiles of James Scott paint a different picture. In the A.D.B. Scott is described as "a confident surgeon and a sound physician. By nature autocratic, he quarrelled both with medical officers in his department and also independent practitioners ... He was however, an able administer and highly respected by his colleagues."

W.E.L.H. Crowther in The Rontgen Oration on March 20, 1954, presented a portrait in words of Dr. James Scott as a most accomplished and interesting gentleman. (This despite the fact that Scott had one of his most bitter feuds with Dr. William Crowther, the speaker's Great Grandfather). Crowther concluded his speech:

"James Scott will be remembered from his writings as a wise physician, courageous surgeon and able, if autocratic, official. As Senior Colonial Surgeon to the administrations of Colonel Sorell and Colonel Arthur, he was responsible for their policies and the development of the medical services of the rapidly expanding colony. It may well be that the respect and esteem so long afforded our profession in Tasmania were in the first instance determined by his personal integrity, professional ability and social distinction." W.E.L.H. Crowther, "Practice and Personalities at Hobart Town 1828 - 1832 as indicated by Day Book of James Scott, M.D.R.N. Senior Colonial Surgeon", Medical Journal of Australia, Vol. 1, No. 12, (March 20, 1954), p. 429.

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